



**DELHI UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY**

U8:6



ALD

DELHI UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Cl. No. U8: 677: N5

406  
H5

Ac. No. 184046

Date of release for loan

This book should be returned on or before the date last stamped below. An overdue charge of 5 Paise will be collected for each day the book is kept overtime.

---



# ALGIERS

1941-1943

*A Temporary Expedient*

*by*

RENÉE PIERRE-GOSSET



*Translated from the French by*  
NANCY HECKSHER

JONATHAN CAPE  
THIRTY BEDFORD SQUARE  
LONDON



FIRST PUBLISHED 1945

JONATHAN CAPE LTD. 30 BEDFORD SQUARE, LONDON  
AND 91 WELLINGTON STREET WEST, TORONTO



THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN COM-  
PLETE CONFORMITY WITH THE  
AUTHORIZED ECONOMY STANDARDS

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN IN THE CITY OF OXFORD  
AT THE ALDEN PRESS  
BOUND BY A. W. BAIN & CO., LONDON

## CONTENTS

I	ARMISTICE COMMISSIONS	7
II	WEYGAND, VICEROY OF AFRICA	15
III	CRYSTALLIZATION OF RESISTANCE	38
IV	NEGOTIATIONS AT CHERCHELL	53
V	THE LANDING	58
VI	ADMIRAL DARLAN	82
VII	TEMPORARY EXPEDIENT	108
VIII	ASSASSINATION AND MONARCHIST PLOT	138
IX	GENERAL GIRAUD	159
X	FINAL EXPEDIENT	184
XI	ROBERT MURPHY	215



## ARMISTICE COMMISSIONS

*La guerre est moins onéreuse que la servitude*

VAUVENARGUES

It was the first of April 1941. I had arrived from Lyons where the winter had been very hard. There I had known defeat, lack of coal, swedes for every meal, queues at the butcher's, semi-poverty. Fingers numb with cold, feet paddling in eight inches of frozen snow, which the salt had transformed into a sort of greyish soup. All this to bring back after an exhausting morning, in an otherwise all too light shopping basket, a pound of carrots which the cunning shopkeeper sold on condition that one also bought four pounds of Jerusalem artichokes.

For me Algiers was the Promised Land. This warm city, white beneath the haze of heat as I saw it from the deck of the ship at dawn, held a promise of kindness. I was like a poor child to whom the magic kingdom of toylant is suddenly thrown open, but who cannot yet quite believe it.

I well remember my first act of faith. This was to buy a magnificent leg of mutton weighing four pounds, for which I paid sixty francs eighty centimes with a delightful feeling of guilt.

The abundance of things in North Africa frightened me a little. Three brightly coloured brother vegetables, scarlet tomatoes, egg-plants varnished a deep purple, and yellow-green marrows were heaped on the stalls. Stacks of onions, heaps of leeks, piles of oranges, little hills of tangerines, vast quantities of lettuce, French beans, Himalayas of potatoes overflowed on to the pavement.

'And you say I really can buy a pound of *each* of these things?' I timorously asked the Arab, guardian of these treasures.

The good man would have sold me the whole shopful, bless him!<sup>1</sup>

Abundance and wealth reigned everywhere. Very few things were

<sup>1</sup> The plain of the Mitidja which surrounds Algiers and which legend says is an ancient river-bed originating from the Sahara, is one big vegetable garden and orchard, which produces four crops of potatoes and four yields of citrus fruit a year.

rationed. Each person had half a pint of oil, half a pound of coffee and soap and a pound of sugar a month. And the Black Market was already easily supplying the extras.

Kabyles came down from the mountain with their donkeys. Undaunted by the police they hawked sweet oil, which they brought in goat-skin bottles from door to door, hidden in their baskets under figs and garlic. Good housewives soon learnt to make soap from it as well. That was the beginning of the Black Market in North Africa.

In Europe this institution was born of necessity. In Algeria it was a natural phenomenon, almost a profession; as the Corsican becomes a customs officer and the Breton a sailor, the Algerian became a trader, right down to the Arab stokers who bought packets of 'Job' or 'Bastos' cigarettes for forty sous in Algiers and sold them for forty francs in Marseilles.

The shop windows in the Rue d'Isly were a fearful temptation for me, with leather shoes at 125 francs, dresses at 200 francs, coats at 500 francs; four or five times cheaper than in France.

I stayed two years in this land of plenty. In twenty-four months I saw prices rise to two, three, five and sometimes ten times what they were.

When I left for London in 1943, the granary was empty. The whole country had been cleared out, the land was without reserves, the population impoverished and suspicious. Currency and bank notes had lost all value, traders sought for solid, convincing goods.

'Living in the country as you do,' the draper said to me, 'try and get me a few pounds of potatoes. I will give you a reel of white cotton in exchange.'

'A little extra cheese?' the grocer asked me, with a promising gesture under the counter. Then, pulling herself up:

'By the way, you being a writer, couldn't you get me a couple of exercise books for my son?'

Though Algeria is one enormous wheat field, the bread had acquired a black hue, it had the soft consistency of putty and the flavour of sour grapes. It goes without saying that there was no more butter. There was a tentative effort to put zebu butter on the market. The zebu, as any Larousse which has not lost its last pages will tell you, is 'a ruminant mammal from Africa, with one or two fleshy lumps on the withers'. Those who know say that the zebu is dying out. So much the better.

## ARMISTICE COMMISSIONS

In West Africa, this humped cow was the source of a rancid butter which the natives mixed with karatas butter to smear on their hair. Someone had the idea of transporting it to Algeria for human consumption.

Tank lorries of the Société Automobile des Transports Tropicaux went regularly from Algiers across the Sahara down to Gao or Niamey with Algerian wine for the Sudan, Nigeria and Senegal. They came back empty. It was decided to melt the zebu butter and pour it into the tanks, which then took the Hoggar track en route for Algiers. By the time they arrived, the butter had melted about ten times in the Sahara sun, and had solidified again at night, when the temperature fell to about ten or twelve degrees centigrade. At the journey's end, after having been melted one last time, this unnameable product was distributed. I leave to your imagination the sort of wine the unfortunate Sudanese and Senegalese settlers received in return.

Such were the brilliant brain-waves born in Vichy. Another remarkable sample was the idea of running motor engines on salad oil. After the wine and the butter, salad nut oil appeared in the tanks of the S.A.T.T., that oil, of which Algeria had been deprived. But as, in the meantime, petrol had been transported in the same tanks, always with the purpose of avoiding their returning empty, for three months Algeria had the pleasure of eating salad seasoned with naphtha.

When all the bitumen oil was finished, a margarine was put on the market which, as my Mozabite grocer revealed to me in deepest confidence, 'because I had two small children', 'di petis zenfants, Madame', was made from the remains of mutton fat melted down.

Next the sugar ration began to dwindle. From two pounds a month it went down to one. The price in the Black Market did the reverse. From ten francs it went, by twenty sous jumps to twenty, thirty, fifty and sixty-five francs, the last price I had to pay before I left.

This astonishing, this indispensable Black Market engulfed the entire production of Algeria, from the local babouches (slippers) to tomatoes, via milk, meat, clothes, cigarettes and goodness knows what else besides.

Even vegetables became a rarity in the town markets. Fats and sulphates, issued parsimoniously by an 'Allotment Committee', one of the innumerable committees, commissions, sub-groups or federations set up by the Vichy government, were insufficient. Production fell. Mildew threatened the vineyards. About the same time, a fifty-first

committee reduced the amount of gasoline issued to growers for their engines in place of petrol, which was set aside for mysterious 'Military necessities'. Little by little one ceased to see convoys of lorries overflowing with vegetables arriving each morning at the market squares.

I had a conversation with old farmer V. who had a big farm in the neighbourhood. The good man said to me quite unperturbed:

'No, I'm not going to take my vegetables to town any longer. That's finished. "They" have reduced my gasoline allowance.'

'You've got horses. You could use them for your deliveries instead.'

'No, I couldn't do that. I have not got any food for them. And I am not going to tire them out.'

'But how are you going to dispose of your crops?'

'Firstly, as my crops cause me a lot of worry owing to lack of manure, I have decided to go in only for potatoes. You know that the government is giving a premium to encourage the cultivation of potatoes. I'm not going to grow anything else.'

'I suppose you know where your potatoes go when shiploads of them leave ostensibly to feed France?'

'Well, my dear lady, what can one do? . . .'

'But even with the premium, Monsieur V., early crop vegetables would bring in more money than potatoes.'

'Money! What should I do with money? It has no more value. A moment ago you spoke of my horses. If one of them dies of overwork, I may have pockets full of these so-called notes but I won't be able to get another horse. That's that. And if I had early crop vegetables, why should I go and sell them wholesale in the markets, when people will come out here from the town and give me the retail price, without any trouble on my part?'

It was true. Whether from the direction of Maison Carrée and Fort de l'Eau or from Guyotville, caravans of townspeople moved along the highways. They came to the doors of the farms, asking very politely for a cabbage, ten pounds of potatoes, or a bunch of leeks. Trams and cars in the suburbs were full up with these 'vegetable hunters' exhausted but triumphant, dragging their booty in incredible bags, bales, baskets and sacks. The favoured few, those who had bicycles or tandems, turned their Sunday excursions to good purpose. The best produce went to the best muscles.

The circuit was closed. Soon nothing was left on the stalls I had so greatly admired twelve or fifteen months earlier.

One day one of my friends, secretary to an industrialist, said to me: 'I work every day from nine till six. I haven't got a bicycle to go into the country on Sundays. As a result, believe it or not, my son and I have eaten nothing but pastes and sweet potatoes for a fortnight.'

Feeding a child was becoming a form of torture, as in France. During the months of June and July 1942 I fed one of my sons, who was only twenty-three months old at the time, on a plate of vermicelli, a bowl of black coffee and dry bread for his breakfast every morning. Children above eighteen months were evidently considered to be fully developed and therefore no longer entitled to tins of powdered milk. A doctor's certificate alone could grant them half a litre of fresh milk each day, but this certificate soon proved to be a dishonoured cheque as the sole dairy in the district had sold its two cows — which at best gave but six or seven litres each per day — because of the lack of fodder.

Like everyone else I was forced to go to the Black Market, where, as though by a miracle, one found Arab women who sold tins of Nestlé's milk for twenty, then thirty, then forty francs.

These were a mother's worries. Those of a housekeeper were no less. Those of the man in the street proved to be the same. Every week brought new restrictions. One had to register for tobacco; it was forbidden to sell cigarettes to women or children under eighteen. What was called coffee was made of lotus beans, date stones and roast figs. Only a quarter of a pound of meat a week was allowed.

Such was the situation. Rations got smaller and smaller, food was insufficient both in quality and quantity. Children had only substitute starch food and no milk. There was no medicine for the sick, and clinics and hospitals used the same dressings twice for operations, after having had them re-sterilized.

The Algerian who started to suffer directly from the war only in 1941 listened to the old Marshal preaching resignation and the necessity of paying for one's sins. But he knew very well that despite everything Algeria was a rich country, where plenty was a thing of the past only for those who were frightened by Black Market prices. He also knew that despite the increase in North African population, Algeria could be self-sufficient if it were not for the systematic campaign of plunder.



One fine day the dockers of Algiers decided to go on strike. They refused to load the ships; they knew full well that their destination was not France, but Genoa, Leghorn or Naples. They also refused to fill up the holds of ships when as much as 80 per cent of the cargo would be removed by the Germans at Marseilles.

The whole port was in a state of ferment. Everyone eagerly awaited the decision of Admiral Abrial, then Governor of Algeria. Next day the Admiral decided to have the port guarded by armed marines: and it was sailors in the uniform of the National Navy who, under the protection of their fellow-sailors, loaded the ships for enemy countries.

In this fashion, with the complicity and often the open help of the representatives of the Vichy Government, the granary of Algeria was emptied, under pretext of feeding the Mother Country.

Here the material aspect of the question was bound up with the political. When, in June, Marshal Pétain signed the 'Honourable armistice' with Germany and Italy, the Axis reserved the right to send Control Commissions, charged with verifying the strict application of its clauses, wherever they deemed it necessary.

Thus were born the Armistice Commissions. It did not need six months of this truce between the Axis and Vichy for the aspect of these military missions to change completely. If one could have identified the enemy 'officers' who were the first to board, on the quayside of La Joliette, ships coming from North Africa, French West Africa or Madagascar, one would have found an overwhelming proportion of middlemen, manufacturers or large-scale merchants.

Those who came to North Africa always belonged to that type. They were at the bottom of the systematic decay of Algerian economy, laying their hands on wheat, fruit, sheep and wine — all that was lacking in France and later in Algeria itself. It is they who directed the huge cargoes of phosphates (in 1941 alone a hundred thousand tons of phosphates left ostensibly for France), minerals, iron, lead and Moroccan manganese to Italian ports.

The Vichy ministry, incapable of preventing this organized pillage, did not stop at tolerating it; it shamelessly supported it. Not one single ton ever left North Africa openly for an Axis port. Officially it was to feed France that the dockers loaded the ships down to the water-line, but they altered course as soon as they had left Algiers, Oran or Bône.

The faked bills of lading deceived nobody. Too many people were in the know, who were also mixed up in the business: settlers, exporters, directors and employees of the shipping companies, workmen in the port and sailors. Even the general public was not ignorant of the true destination of the enormous cargoes of goods which the Ministry of Supply continued to shield in the name of France.

Already in March 1941, 250 Germans landed all at once in North Africa: students, economists and Gestapo agents, not to speak of business men and tourists. And the tourists were very numerous. . . .

These innocent pilgrims scattered themselves over the North African countryside, in the palm groves, in the olive and orange groves. They did business with the owners — strictly personal business, of course! — like this:

‘At how much do you value your total crop?’

‘A hundred thousand kilos.’

‘And how much did you get per kilo last year?’

‘Five francs.’

‘I will give you double that rate in cash, for the whole standing crop,’ the German then offered.

And the grower saw his crop paid for before it had even ripened. It might rain or not, it might even hail, he did not have to worry. In three months the ‘experts’ of the Reich raked in the whole of the North African harvest, while others, by similar methods attacked the mines of Morocco, the canning industry and poultry and cattle breeders.

As consumer of a solitary weekly cutlet, I one day expressed my indignation in front of a sheep breeder about the wholesale requisitioning of cattle.

‘But,’ he cynically replied, ‘what are you grumbling about? We haven’t any good pasturage, our sheep are scraggy. They take them away and fatten them up, and later on they will be able to provide us with meat.’

‘Sure! . . .

Of course we never saw the departed cattle, either alive or in the shape of a joint; and even at the present time, North Africa is still suffering from these extortions.

But even in this roundabout of dishonesty, the rogues did not agree among themselves. The Germans and Italians each worked independently and often in open opposition to one another.

When they arrived in Algiers, they were accommodated at the Hôtel Aletti. Thinking to do the right thing, the *maître d'hôtel* put Germans and Italians at the same table. Before forty-eight hours had passed, these most excellent Allies were turning their backs on one another, in opposite corners of the restaurant.

Soon the Italians decided to eat in other restaurants in the town, but the public gave them such a reception that they decided to requisition an entire hotel for their personal use. Their spirit of conquest made them choose the Hôtel d'Angleterre. After this they proceeded to get their supplies by requisitioning goods in the markets. The Germans did the same for their messes. The 'signors' decided to get up a bit earlier. One fine day the German Quartermaster went to the market and found the merchants apologizing with a sly grin:

'These gentlemen have already sent in their order. We are very sorry. Here is the requisitioning order.'

'That does not matter,' said the German coolly. 'I cancel it.'

The argument which followed is still remembered in the district.

The only ground of reconciliation between the Germans and the Italians was their implacable violent hatred of General Weygand, the representative of the Vichy government in French Africa, against whom the representatives of the Axis waged a fierce and underhand war for more than a year.

## WEYGAND, VICEROY OF AFRICA

*Les peuples sont là quelque temps devant que de s'apercevoir qu'ils le sont*

CARDINAL DE RETZ

WHEN Weygand arrived in Algiers, in French opinion what weighed most heavily upon him was not the defeat but the armistice. The verdict of history will probably endorse this view. The little man, around whom centres a double legend — that of his birth<sup>1</sup> and that of Foch's sponsorship — was called upon too late to succeed Gamelin. But, having once accepted the succession, at the worst possible moment, did he not dream more of maintaining the existing social order in France than of continuing the fight to the end against the invading enemy? It will be a subject for discussion for a long time as to whether the reflected glory which Weygand drew from Foch was more than his due, or whether he had cause to regret having emerged from his shadow. In any case, it is a fact that in 1940 Pétain and Weygand, through their confirmation of the defeat, were partners in upholding a class, a way of thinking, a hierarchy and a social order in which they held the highest rank.

Nevertheless, General Weygand's reputation remains high in the minds of the people. No one dreams of doubting his patriotism. This old man of seventy-four continues to parade his 'figure of a second lieutenant', his rapid step, his curt speech. I remember how, during those dreadful days of May 1940, when Gamelin had to give way to him, the new Commander-in-Chief arrived in Paris and immediately visited Paul Reynaud.

<sup>1</sup> Maxime Weygand is entered in the certificates of birth in Brussels under the name of Maxime de Nimal, born of unknown parents. A certain Mademoiselle de Nimal adopted the child. When at Saint Cyr, he suddenly took the name of Weygand, being adopted by a Monsieur and Madame Weygand of Marseilles. At the Cavalry School of Saumur his comrades called him Brécard or René de Segonzac.

When Foch died, the King of the Belgians, Albert, went to the funeral. On hearing that General Weygand was to receive him, he made the comment that this was all the better, as he would be almost 'at home'. When his orderly asked him for more information, he said he did not know. According to some people, Weygand was the illegitimate son of Leopold II, according to others, of the Emperor Maximilian, who in turn was an illegitimate son of the Duc de Reichstadt.

As he alighted from his car, twenty cinema projectors stood ready. Three days later, in all the cinema halls in France, a satisfied murmur of approval arose when there appeared on the screen the figure of the little man, full of energy, climbing the stairs three at a time. What would come of all this time was to show. But for a few days a foolish wave of optimism swept over the country. Pious slogans helped.<sup>1</sup>

When Weygand, then Minister for National Defence at Vichy, left his post and went to French North Africa as pro-consul, his defeatism at Tours and Bordeaux was overlooked, his age slipped into the background, and even the defeat itself was almost forgotten. As he had agreed to go to North Africa, the people thought it could only be to prepare the revenge and to put France back into the war.<sup>2</sup> The General fed the people of Algiers on this illusion with the help of marches-past of Spahis and light cavalry in their gay uniforms. We had never seen such a military display in Algiers, even before the collapse of our army. How were the crowds to know that there were more military bands than anti-aircraft batteries on the soil of Africa?

Slowly the idea that 'we have not been beaten' grew into what would have been a cult, if the population of French North Africa had possessed an atom of character. Unfortunately the idea merely provoked a reaction, typical of the Algerian people: 'Since we have not been beaten, we shall not have to suffer.'

Weygand can hardly be blamed for the lack of spirit of these people. Yet the Weygand of Algiers — from September 1940 to November 1941 — disappointed France possibly even more than the Commander-in-Chief of the Battle of the Somme had done.

Two, nay, three or four Weygands opposed each other, contradicted themselves in word and deed during this period. There was nothing straightforward or clear-cut in the policy of the 'délégué général' in Africa.

First as to his powers: theoretically he was a sort of viceroy of Africa, and that was what the man in the street thought him to be. In actual fact, the Residents of Tunis and Rabat still depended on Admiral Darlan, Minister for Foreign Affairs, as did the Governor of Algeria, Admiral

<sup>1</sup> If France should be in danger, call on 'Weygand', Foch was reputed to have said before dying. It was too good to be true. . . .

<sup>2</sup> Moreover his contentions with Pierre Laval were becoming known. To provoke Laval's hatred is, *ad absurdum*, almost a proof of patriotism.

Abrial. M. Boisson, Minister of the Interior and Governor-General, took orders from the Minister of the Colonies. Weygand's authority was therefore merely illusory, he 'co-ordinated', that was all.

In the spring of 1941, General Weygand received my husband, who wanted to leave for Nigeria. He assured him that he would procure his entrance permit to French West Africa. Immediately afterwards, my husband was warned that this was enough for M. Boisson, a typical autocrat, to refuse the official seal. My husband spoke again to Weygand, whose only reply, given with a shrug of the shoulders, was:

'What can I do? I cannot come into open conflict with M. Boisson. He is so bad-tempered.'

Secondly, consider what was General Weygand's main aim and idea: the preparation for once more taking up arms in Africa against the Axis. The 'well-informed' circles of Algiers said that he was only waiting for an opportunity to attack the Italians in Tripolitania. The very man who, in June, declared that it was folly to continue the fight was entrusted with restarting it.<sup>1</sup>

Certainly Weygand encouraged, or, at least, tolerated, the setting-up of secret arms depots, of petrol stocks, of fuel oil, hidden from the Germans. He certainly encouraged the creation of groups of 'native workers' — an evident camouflage. But when Nogues protested against Flandin allowing the Germans to replace the Italians in control of Morocco, Weygand remained silent. From this time, the underground reinforcement of the African army ceased. True, he hated the Germans (who finally dislodged him and imprisoned him) but if he had had to choose between a German defeat, bringing with it the rising of the Front Popu-

<sup>1</sup> On several occasions, when talking about the Armistice in front of intimate friends, General Weygand gave the following details: In June 1940, he had examined all the possibilities as far as continuing the fight was concerned. He asserted that the idea of a 'retreat in Brittany' was out of the question. As to North Africa, he consulted General Nogues, who, let us not forget, was then commanding the French Forces in Africa, and in agreement with Marshal Pétain. 'Nogues is said to have replied that 'he had just sufficient troops to repel an Italian attack on the Mareth Line'. What modern equipment he had was concentrated near Bizerta. There was no industry in the three countries of North Africa. Weygand confirmed that, bearing in mind these points, Nogues had formally concluded that it was impossible to continue the war on African soil. Without wishing to quibble on these questionable arguments, it can be said that General Nogues gave the impression to all who came in contact with him that, at least till June 20th, he had been in favour of resistance to the end. To such a degree that Mandel in Bordeaux and de Gaulle in London thought they could count on him. General de Gaulle on June 19th, speaking on the wireless from London, said: 'In the Africa of Bugeaud, of Lyautey, of Nogues all who have honour must refuse to fulfil the terms of the enemy.'

laire, and a Nazi victory which would establish a 'strong' government in France, his choice would infallibly have fallen on the latter. Moreover, a report was spread throughout the town of Algiers by the officers of the 5th Chasseurs that the General had said to them after a parade:

'Never forget that the ally of yesterday may be the ally of tomorrow.'

He also recalled one of Foch's sayings: 'Final battles are won with remains of armies.'

Nobody would take seriously the fact that his official speeches were hostile to the Allies, and followed the dictates of the National Revolution. 'The enemy listens to all we say.' Those who reported his speeches, his partial confidences, accompanied the words with a knowing wink. But when he had to act, unfortunately he followed his spoken word, not his 'inner thought'. He allowed his police force to track down the Gaullists, he had a colonel punished who did not approve the policy of the Armistice, he let British prisoners be interned under appalling conditions.

And, when on June 23rd, 1941, he spoke to the Légion des Combattants, he used similar words to those with which he had addressed the officers in Algiers (but this time to say the opposite). 'Believe me, duty cannot lie on the side of our former Ally.'

Yet with all his power and with all sincerity he opposed the looting of North Africa by Germany and Italy. Conflict with the Armistice Commissions became almost permanent. He found the Governor of Algeria across his path. That was a great time for Admirals in France. They were found everywhere except at sea. Darlan had three portfolios, Platon was at the Ministry of the Colonies, Esteva was in Tunis, Decoux at Hanoi, Robert in the West Indies. They made Regional and Departmental prefects of Admirals. Admiral Bard, before going to Berne as Ambassador, was Prefect of Police in Paris. When 'Commissaires du Pouvoir' were created and were given as a task to see that the officials of the National Revolution acted in an orthodox manner, Admiral Gouton was put in charge.<sup>1</sup> And who was the secretary of the delegation of the

<sup>1</sup> Two stories were being repeated all over France at the time. It was said that, to counter-balance the famous 'return to the soil' Vichy was going to found a League for the return of Admirals to the sea.

It was also rumoured that a controversy would take place concerning the succession to Cardinal Baudrillart. Would it be, according to Canon Law, a vice-admiral or a rear-admiral who would put on the purple robe?

government of French Africa, alongside Weygand himself? Another Admiral, Fénard.

Like most of his colleagues, Admiral Abrial was quite unfitted for his post. What made matters worse, was that he had more personality than intelligence.<sup>1</sup> Collaborationist, anti-Ally, he opposed Weygand wholeheartedly as soon as he saw the latter flirting with the Americans. There was open hostility between these two men. The outcome remained, however, somewhat ambiguous, because Abrial threatened to show up some of Weygand's economic deals. Finally a plot was laid — of naval appearance: on July 13th, 1941, Admiral Leahy, in Vichy, obtained from Admiral Darlan a promise that Admiral Abrial should be removed. Darlan, who had ceded the portfolio of the Interior to Pucheu, immediately obtained Pucheu's signature recalling the Governor of Algeria and replacing him by Weygand. Curious coincidence, on the same day the tanker *Scheherazade*, a ship belonging to the Compagnie Française des Pétroles, and hitherto detained in New York, received her papers enabling her to proceed to her destination, Morocco.

Therefore General Weygand used his American connections to overcome his first enemy. Would he also use them in the fight against the German and Italian commissions? It was his only trump card. Yet once more he plunged into an involved and subtle game, where the main thread remained obscure. He hedged, promised and retracted, encouraged, then disowned all knowledge, gave with one hand and withdrew with the other. The General was playing the part of a go-between.

As Darlan was to do two years later, he succeeded in making a most favourable impression on President Roosevelt's envoys, especially on Mr. Robert D. Murphy who trusted him completely.

As soon as Admiral Leahy's adviser arrived in Algiers, the two men met. Mutual sympathy drew them together and a friendship was struck. Weygand showered soothing words on the American to make up for the official speeches he was obliged to make.

This friendship was not entirely disinterested, for an economic agree-

<sup>1</sup> His witticisms were almost as famous as those of MacMahon. Here is one which was being told in Algiers: The Admiral was visiting the desert wastes of South Algeria. He was dismayed on seeing this uncultivated stretch lost to agriculture when France was suffering from famine. 'But irrigation is not possible, sir. Without irrigation there can be no cultivation of the soil. Only merinos resist.' 'Merinos', replied the Admiral, 'then tell me, why are they not planted here?'



ment soon followed. Messrs. Monick, Marchal, Tarbes de Saint Har-douin worked on it. It was signed in February 1941. This agreement chiefly ensured that the native population received cotton, sugar and tea. Two tankers were to cruise between the United States and Morocco.<sup>1</sup> What did General Weygand concede in exchange? Above all, promises regarding the fulfilment of the Armistice clauses. He would not exceed them, even though he was badgered by Rommel, who needed food and equipment for the Afrika Korps. The United States were in a position to blackmail — they intended to exploit it.

Besides this, Weygand gave entry permits to twenty-four Americans in the capacity of vice-consuls with diplomatic privileges. They were there to make sure that the goods supplied by the United States did not follow the same route as Algerian products. In point of fact, they were soon to play an essential part in the preparation of the Allied landing.

Was General Weygand taken in? Most certainly not. One day, during the autumn of 1941, the big black car belonging to Mr. Robert Murphy drew up in front of the Winter Palace. It was supposed that this was, as usual, a friendly visit or a conversation regarding economic questions. But the United States representative went straight to the point. Supposing there were an Allied landing in Africa, would Maxime Weygand lend his personal prestige to support the action? Would he be willing to bring Frenchmen into the War again, even against the advice of the Marshal?

The General was not caught off his guard. The answer was immediate: 'What guarantees are there? How many men will there be? How many planes, ships, tanks?'

In all likelihood Mr. Murphy already had a fairly clear notion of the events pending. But he did not wish to give this information away without due reaction on the other side. He entrenched himself behind the idea of a mere hypothesis and the beaten man of 1940 was not satisfied.

This soldier was confronted with an offer of illegality, rebellion, dissent, adventure. But fifty-seven years in the army are not exactly conducive to adventure. He lacked youth, enthusiasm, recklessness and a certain element of folly, without which great things cannot be achieved. He was willing to do great things, bold things, but with the utmost discretion.

<sup>1</sup> The *Tarn* was torpedoed by an unidentified submarine off the Algerian coast, when she was bringing American oil to Algiers, via Fedala.

Here was to be found that dreadful 'complex of legality' which later was to hinder General Giraud. Giraud, tortured, was brought to throw the dice but with one thought in mind, the return to legality.

In short, Weygand's reflexes were inhibited: he refused to take the plunge, and, in that moment, lost for ever the field-marshal's baton which had been his life's ambition.

On Weygand's refusal Mr. Robert Murphy eluded the issue, retreated, and decided to try again later on. For he must have Weygand on his side, Weygand represented the Army, Weygand was a splendid figurehead.

But events were to move faster than the diplomacy of the American Minister. Even though the General officially forbade his officers to maintain contact with the Americans after this conversation,<sup>1</sup> in the eyes of the extremists of Vichy and even more of Paris, he was irretrievably compromised. Benoist-Mechin demanded his execution.

His position became intolerable, placed as he was between the American proposals and the demands of the German commissions. The Italians insisted upon complete control of Tunisian and Algerian ports. Weygand refused. Then the surrender of barges and equipment. Further refusal. The reopening of Axis Consulates. Still he refused. Rommel demanded wheat lorries and fuel. Weygand remained firm. Grimly he refused all concessions, such as the sale of Paris papers published under Nazi control, the sale of the French edition of *Signal*, the substantial requisition of local supplies.

The Reich, weary of this, presented an ultimatum, which Darlan accepted apparently without undue objections. Abetz had seen to this, so the story ran. . . .

Suddenly, on November 17th, there came an order from Vichy: 'General Weygand is urgently recalled to consult with the Government.'

He knew what the note meant. For the last time he entered his quaint little T-shaped room in the Winter Palace. For the last time, with furious steps, he walked on the priceless carpets.

He opened the drawers of his brown marquetry desk, searched through his papers, burnt some and handed over others to his son, Captain Jacques Weygand. He then turned into the blue mosaic gallery, descended the

<sup>1</sup> Very friendly relations were established between the members of the United States Consulate and Colonels Suffren and Truchet, Commanders Navarre and de Witasse following the example of their Chief.

narrow stairs, slowly, as though completely overcome with fatigue. Gasser, his faithful orderly, followed.

His slight figure stopped for a few moments in the courtyard. For the last time he looked on the familiar surroundings, on the palm trees with the sun glimmering through the leaves, on the Spahi standing guard.

An eyewitness told me: 'He no longer looked like a cavalry officer. He was more like an elderly jockey.'

People heard him say, and they repeated the words:

'They haven't got me yet.'

He flew to Vichy, taking no luggage. Two days later he was a finished man. 'They' did get him and he had given way. He had accepted all the terms: guarded residence at Cap d'Antibes for a few days, compulsion to give a farewell speech to the Algerian troops by wireless. He preached obedience to the Marshal.

There was some excitement in Algiers, though not much. Weygand's resignation was for a time a disturbing element. The last rampart against the German claims in North Africa was thought to have fallen.

The departure of General Weygand, his replacement by the insignificant Yves Chatel in November 1941, marked the beginning of a period of madness. The atmosphere was quite unreal and utterly unbelievable to people who did not live through it. Enemies rubbed shoulders with each other, hundreds of plots were laid, the police were taking violent measures of repression in a musical comedy setting. Treachery, courage, ignorance, venality showed up against a background of doubt as to the morrow, of unvoiced hopes, of irresolute waiting. On this overcrowded stage, the American Consuls played the main parts. In this winter of 1941 in North Africa there were dozens of them, surrounded by secretaries, and others, Civil Servants with apparently ill-defined jobs. Usually charming in manner, sometimes erratic, they were much in view, flitting around making contacts. It was impossible to fathom the reason why they had been chosen for their jobs; thus John Boyd was a commercial man, Redgway Knight represented a firm of French wine merchants in the United States, Kenneth Pendar, amongst other accomplishments, was an archaeologist, another was one of the main adornments of Harry's Bar in Paris. . . .

When, perchance, the American vice-consuls found themselves confronted by members of the Armistice Commissions, they were content

merely to turn their backs. But, on the other hand, they were often to be found at the Casino of the Hôtel Aletti, in the evenings, separated from German and Italian officers by the width of the roulette table. On both sides money was being put on the '27, en plein' or on the last dozen. But their play was half-hearted. They were there to observe each other, and this they did. And half-way between these two rival parties, the leaders of the Legion, such as Breuleux, whose pretty wife had the shock of having her head shaved merely because she had not remained neutral. There, too, was Canavaggio, the confidant of Governor Chatel. Sometimes John Knox made a spectacular entrance, followed by his blonde fiancée, Joan Tuyl. Everyone in Algiers knew that John Knox went to Saint-Cyr, joined the Legion before going to West Point and that he was at Algiers as an unofficial attaché rather than as vice-consul. Everyone also knew that Joan Tuyl, of English origin, had escaped internment at Laghouat by a sheer miracle. Being under the special supervision of the Vichy police, frequently on returning home from one of her mysterious strolls, she found her flat had been searched from top to bottom. In spite of all the trouble they took, they never succeeded in placing her five cushions on the couch in the order they were left in — one black, one green, one black, one green, one green.

Spies, counter-spies, genuine diplomats, officers in mufti, agents, informers, high-class and low-class demi-mondaines and even society people, all elbowed each other politely, and at the same time fiercely kept watch during those evenings in the gambling rooms. In point of fact nothing much was discovered, nothing much revealed, because everybody was too much on guard to be careless. The capital mistakes which did take place among the circle of American consuls were in Morocco, not in Algiers.

Confidential meetings took place in the following manner: a car would slowly be driven up a deserted street, skirting the pavement, and would stop alongside one of the pedestrians, the 'right' one, he would quickly get in and once inside the car — be it American, German or Italian, the procedure never varied — talks could take place without fear of the occupants being disturbed.

In Algiers the most hackneyed methods were used, such as readers of spy stories love. Reports sent to Tangiers were surrendered to the diplomatic bag written in invisible ink. What was not hidden in the American

diplomatic bag which, once a week, left Tunis for Tangiers, passing through Algiers and Casablanca? In the strong boxes of the United States consulate documents were carefully locked away, next to packets of 'Lucky Strike' and tins of Portuguese sardines, which were also sent from this amazing town of Tangiers, where everything — from whisky to men's consciences — was to be bought by handing out hundred peseta notes.

I will refer later to the real and main activity of the American consuls before the landing, which was the cause of their being. Apart from it they indulged in discreet and not unsubtle propaganda: to officers among their friends they distributed technical pamphlets dealing with all the problems of modern warfare, to the engineers, doctors and chemists they gave printed bulletins containing articles on the latest applications of contemporary science, reports on the activities of universities, etc. . . .

A great deal of activity was centred among the native population, tracts were distributed showing the superiority of American arms, of American principals, of American industry. I remember an alluring slogan which ran: 'The best fed army in the world', meaning the American Army. Only one thing was overlooked, written Arabic was not read by the masses and moreover the natives remained far away from thoughts of war, while it did not directly touch them.

So it was Weygand who insured the best propaganda for America by importing cotton, sugar and tea, products which were lacking. The natives repaid in their own coin: for example, no ship carrying phosphates for Italy left without the consulate being given twenty-four hours' notice. Once an Italian cargo boat remained a whole week in the port of Algiers, not daring to leave, hesitating, weighing the chances. When, finally, it left the port it was sunk just outside the territorial waters.

Next day, John Knox, smiling affably behind his butterfly tie, entered the 'bistro' where he drank his first 'vin rosé' of the morning. This little café, almost immediately opposite the consulate, was the usual rendezvous of the employees of Algerian tramways and some of the consulate officials. On one side of the bar Arabic was spoken, on the other English. This took place under the encouraging eye of Marshal Pétain whose portrait loomed above the coffee percolator. On the other corner, opposite the café, was a dress shop, of unassuming appearance, yet here the cars of the Armistice commission were seen to stop a little too frequently. . . .

From nine o'clock in the morning, people who had, officially or unofficially, something to do with the consulate, were often to be found at the bar where 'vin rosé' was freely drunk, and the latest war news was openly discussed, especially false news, and the plight of the Italians.

Sam Dashiell lived nearby, at the Djemila Palace. He was the United Press correspondent. He would sometimes turn up, filled with indignation, having left a few minutes earlier, because the police had searched his house in the early hours. They discovered amongst his papers, the copy of a letter from Edouard Herriot, a report of General de la Laurencie to Marshal Pétain, numbers of the clandestine paper *Combat*, which was then being launched under the editorship of his friend, Jean Castet.

Good old Sam, in his delightful French, would reply to the sbirros with a glib smile:

'Trouvé tout cela dans mon boîte aux lettres . . .

Yet all this time in a matchbox lying on a tray, in a vase full of flowers were two documents which, had they been discovered, would have cost the American journalist much. But the police were more preoccupied by a new discovery: in a letter sent to Sam Dashiell by a Parisian journalist, a de Segonzac, he had been plainly addressed as 'colonel'. Although he explained at length that this was merely a nickname, a joke, it was of no avail. From that moment he had a file in the Intelligence Department, and obstinate plain clothes men followed him. . . . In May 1942, he was politely told to leave. . . .

Above all the police were on the look-out for the organizations which were helping people to reach England, to reach Gaullist colonies. At that time, every young man of twenty dreamed of rejoining the fight. They all attempted to do so. All the youth of Algiers, of Oran — especially, it must be admitted, those who had recently left the metropolis — were thinking in terms of barges, of fishing smacks, false passports, trips across the Sahara. Somewhat naively they imagined, in their enthusiasm, that the United States consuls were there solely to help them, whereas these consuls had many reasons for discouraging the young men from leaving for England and none for helping them. Forced to great caution, they were nevertheless reluctant to lose pro-Allied elements which would be invaluable on the day of the landing. They were obliged, however, to keep silent as to this. So they postponed action, feeding the men on

encouraging words, recommending extreme prudence such as they themselves had to observe.<sup>1</sup>

The young men were not discouraged. But to leave North Africa secretly was by no means an easy matter; it was indeed an adventure of great peril. Those who kept on arriving from Marseilles, Lyons or Paris fondly thought that they were more than half-way on their journey. Restrictions were numerous: by sea it was forbidden to go more than one kilometre from the coast and motor-boats were prohibited. On land, renewed watch was being kept on the Spanish-Moroccan frontier: bribes were being offered to anyone who brought back frontier crashers. To attempt evasion by the Sahara was almost impossible: beyond doubt, a desert is definitely the last place in which to hide. All the aerodromes were more or less under Italian and German control, besides which the military authorities, having had several experiences, had lost confidence in their pilots and only gave out a limited supply of petrol, carefully calculated to be insufficient for Gibraltar to be reached. Every night, on the air-fields the magnetos were removed from the 'planes.

Repression by the police was in full swing. Hundreds of young men whose only crime was their patriotism were being tortured by modern methods, which a woman finds impossible to describe.

And still the urge for escape swept through Algiers. The spectacular success of one gave new heart to those who had failed. The most famous escape, which made the town of Algiers laugh for six weeks, was that in which an Italian general, in charge of the Armistice commission, participated. This general, dressed up in all his glory, took his seat in a Savoia which was taking off from Tunis en route for Algeria. At Maison Blanche a large reception was organized: an air detachment took the salute, distinguished people were present. The Savoia landed, came to a stop, engines ticking over. The general, his suite, and the crew emerged from the 'plane and lined up on the runway. Trumpets blew . . . Suddenly the noise of the three engines being revved up drowned the music. Three French second lieutenants, pilots, had leapt into the abandoned Savoia and, rolling at full speed over the aerodrome, took off, carrying away the General's luggage, that of his men, the official papers and their spare

<sup>1</sup> Immediately after Pearl Harbour, the youth of Algiers believed that the position of the consuls was entirely changed. There was an uninterrupted procession to the consulate of these young men who wished to join the American army. How many agents provocateurs were there amongst them?

plumes. The arrival at Gibraltar caused, as one can image, a slight sensation.

In this field anecdotes abound: there are hundreds where heroism and light comedy join hands.

Thus, the escape of a pilot<sup>1</sup> — now one of the ace pilots of the Fighting French — took off for Gibraltar ten minutes after the ceremony in Rabat, at which he was given the Croix de Guerre.

Again, the story of a Norwegian ship interned in Dakar was being told in North Africa. Some essential boiler pipes were removed to prevent it leaving for England. Once a month the Captain was given these pipes in order to run the engines for a few hours, under supervision, otherwise the engines would have become rusty. During these few hours each month, the sailors made sham pipes which they returned instead of the real ones. On the following night the United Nations were richer by one ship.

Each individual drew his own conclusions from these stories and tried to learn. Algerian life was a network of sundry small plots, of plans laid by conspirators. Side by side were many treasons, many people 'funked' at the last minute, many false moves were made. All these plans were made in a world of changing values. Some young men whom I knew, and who formerly would not have taken an apple from a neighbour's orchard, thought nothing of stealing a yacht moored to the Surcouf jetty.

A curious phenomenon occurred: following the well-known principle of physics that the level of water remains constant in communicating vessels, the young people of Algiers migrated to Oran, while the youth of Oran poured into Algiers, as in each port it was rumoured that the other held more possibilities. Names and addresses of Spanish 'bosses', of owners of fishing smacks for sale, of dealers in forged papers, of ferriers at Oudjda or at Ouezzane were being whispered from ear to ear. Everybody was plotting, but the plots seldom came to anything.

On the day my husband left, after the usual last minute instructions, he said to me: 'If you find you cannot leave legally, go to the garage man in Belfort who has already supplied petrol for a departure, then go to X. the estate agent, then to Gilbert M. the barrister. And get Knox's advice. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Later, on board a British aircraft-carrier, Ensign Claude found a glorious death during the operations in Sicily.



For there were two classes of departures: people who left with their papers in order, and those who left illegally. If there were the slightest chance of tracing foreign blood in one's veins, the first method was preferable. I suddenly found myself of Belgian nationality, with a perfectly sound identity card. A perfect piece of forgery, of course.

Under various titles, such as repatriation offices and commercial offices, the consuls of the various occupied countries were still in Algiers. Their main concern was to help their compatriots to reach the 'other side'. Many young Belgians, Dutch, Poles, Norwegians, all invalidated out of the army by complacent doctors as 'unfit to carry arms', departed for Portuguese Angola.

Weeks, sometimes months passed before the coveted visas were secured. When the passport was there — a genuine paper for those who for months had lived as outlaws — escape followed within forty-eight hours. After months in a prison or in a camp, continuous summonses and questionings, captures, repeated escapes. . . . I saw people break into tears when they were handed their passports.

I have lived through the emotions, the anxieties, the hopes of this kind of adventure because my husband has been through it. His first attempt was to go officially to Nigeria from where he had intended to reach British Nigeria. But this plan fell through. Boisson refused an entry permit to French West Africa. His second attempt was by the south. He wanted to go towards Touggourt, Ouargla, El Golca, then towards Djanet and the Tibesti. . . . But the roughness of the desert, the rubble, the sand, rendered this expedition impossible.

Back once more in Algiers, each day fresh plans were discussed. There was a ship at Oran owned by a Spaniard: thank God instinct prevented him joining up with this man, for the other stowaways ended up in prison. Another plan had to do with a boat near Algiers, but came to nothing. Also an escape by plane, by night. Ten other plans fell through almost before they were born. Finally, my husband decided, together with his friend Segonzac, also a journalist, to get across the Algerian-Moroccan frontier on foot. They succeeded in broad daylight, and reached Casablanca safely, but without papers, as outlaws. A ship should have fetched them there but it never came. Each week promises were renewed. At the end of five months they decided to cross again on foot the forbidden zone of French North Morocco, in order to reach Tangiers.

It was an exhausting trek, a forced march across dunes. They were torn by thorny bushes and barbed wire, chased by Arab douar's dogs, by Spanish police. They walked forty-eight kilometres in eight hours in the first night, along an unmarked track. After unbelievable adventures they reached Tangiers in a taxi, having broken through the police barrage by showing identity cards belonging to Moroccan Jews — these fair-skinned, blond-haired men.

But in Tangiers, difficulties were not at an end. Franco police kept a fierce watch. Fortunately they had faithful and energetic friends on whom they could count. A few days later they reached Gibraltar.

In all these attempts, one needed the utmost common sense, great prudence, also some recklessness. But courage alone was not sufficient. For one mad man's success — such as the one who got on the roof of a train and descended, in broad daylight, in the station of Tangiers — fifty failed and landed up in jail.

'The son of a friend of mine has just been pinched,' my landlady told me one evening. 'He was found unconscious in the bottom of a boat which had run aground on the beach of Sidi Ferruch. Beside him lay a compass and a map, indicating what he had meant to do.'

Many left in old tubs of boats, knowing nothing about the sea and even less about the art of navigation. One of the few successes in this type of escape was that of a Capitaine de corvette Moreau, who left the Algerian coast with a few Belgian friends. After many ordeals — engine trouble, gales, hunger and thirst — after remaining four days in view of their destination but unable to reach it because of the wind, they were at length picked up by Spanish fishermen, republicans, and reached Gibraltar in a state of exhaustion, almost at death's door.

Later, Odette Moreau, his wife, attempted the same thing. She convinced a few friends to try this means of escape. One of them, S., undertook to find money and to buy a boat. This done, petrol, food supplies, maps, navigation instruments,<sup>1</sup> warm clothes had to be found and brought on board without attracting attention; a sailor willing to join in the adventure had to be discovered and the port had to be left without the alarm being given.

<sup>1</sup> Algerian police were much puzzled for many months as to how an Italian compass, from a Savota Marchetti plane, could have got into a boat captured just before casting off. It was a secret which a few of us shared. . . .

At last, after many weeks, S. and his comrades succeeded in doing all this. The day of the departure arrived. Everyone had put into the common purse the remains of their money. One gave a thousand francs, another five thousand, a third twenty thousand and the fourth gave two. Money had no further value, the ship was there, that evening they would be at sea.

'Before leaving', S. decided, 'we'll go on a binge, a real proper binge.' This they did in a café near the beach from which they were to leave. A Black Market feed, of course. They drank and ate a great deal, made a lot of noise, talked too much. Life was grand. . . . But at the end of the meal the police arrived; Black Market inspectors:

'What? Meals at two hundred francs each? Wine on a wineless day? You can't get away with this, my lads. Follow us.'

The adventure was ended. A Naval court in Bizerta sentenced them to years of imprisonment.<sup>1</sup>

Other attempts were luckier. A good friend of ours, Gilbert Comte, the Paris representative of 'The March of Time', was arrested, also caught as he was about to leave. The naval officer who was to lock him up was André Bréart, his best friend.<sup>2</sup> They waited until there was a well-disposed judge before bringing him to court. On the appointed day, Comte was very surprised to hear his sentence:

'This is a fine thing, Sir, having women on board, getting up orgies. It will cost you two hundred francs, and consider yourself lucky.'

He certainly did.

Sometimes, in this way, inspectors, police commissioners, judges, merciful or convinced, placed themselves in opposition to the Vichy repression machine. How many times did young men get called to the office of a police official on whose desk, fully in evidence, they could see a warrant for their arrest, to come into force on the morrow? A few vague questions were asked and they were sent away. It was up to them to draw their conclusions from what they had seen. Often too, files were 'placed at the bottom of the pile' or 'misaid'.

<sup>1</sup> The end was even more tragic, as I heard later: Odette Morceau was discovered by the Germans when they arrived in Bizerta and was being sent to a Reich prison. The aircraft in which she was placed was brought down over the sea by an Allied plane.

<sup>2</sup> Through a dreadful irony of fate, Bréart, who had actively participated in the liberation of North Africa, working with the underground movement, was killed by an American shell on the *Primauguet* on the day of the Casablanca landing, this ship being sent to certain suicide by Admiral Mcheher.

But there was also odious cruelty, methods equal to those of the Middle Ages, when the 'guilty' had the bad luck of falling on an official imbued with the good principles of the National Revolution.

Prisons, camps, cells filled up, provided for by civilian tribunals, by the Naval Court of Bizerta, or by military courts of Algiers or Morocco, such as the Meknes tribunal, where the officers had been most carefully chosen, and gave out the sentences they were told to. Thousands of young people of eighteen, twenty, twenty-five years of age, Belgians, Poles, Republicans of Spain and even Soviet citizens were there, not to mention the French, slowly dying in the workers' camps of Bou Arfa, Colomb Bechar, Berrjuaghia, Boghari, Keriadza (to mention only a few). They were wellnigh exterminated by dysentery, fever, the lack of sanitation and the appalling food.

One Belgian, Rosenberg, told me how he had arrived from Brussels, having crossed the frontier, the forbidden zone, the occupied, then unoccupied zones and the Mediterranean as a stowaway, thinking to find freedom at the end of this journey.

'I was put away as were many others and made to help build the Trans-Saharan Railway, made to break stones on the track under a broiling sun which killed us off like flies. If we kicked up a fuss, we were sent to Meridja to build tracks in the rock. Our only food was a revolting gruel and bread. Punishments were more varied, from having to run with sacks containing 80 lbs of stones strapped on the shoulders, to the electric current, including the ordeal of the tomb, well known in the Foreign Legion. I came out alive. I was lucky. . . .'

In the minds of many, the memory of this treatment inflicted on them has, alas, become synonymous with France. No, these brutes were not France, but during two years in Algeria, they were one dreadful aspect of our country. And this daily buffoonery which I bring up so often and which indeed prevails through all the most dreadful incidents has always this tragic aspect as well. A caricature of bleeding, wounded France.

The Légion des Combattants also played an important part on the Algerian scene. In fact, it soon became more important than it had ever been in metropolitan France. It sprang from the defeat (and from the counter-revolution which the National Revolution actually is), as natur-

ally as a mushroom from a manure heap. It set off merely as a group of ex-service men. What indeed could be more praiseworthy than the carrying on in spite of the collapse, of patriotic virtues and military traditions? But very soon it changed its face, becoming a political instrument first, then the nucleus of the single party dreamt of by Vichy. For two years the legion grew, widened its field of action, became troublesome and seditious, intervened in public matters — a State within a State, the container of the pure doctrine of the National Revolution, a privileged child of the old Marshal. These ex-service men, pensioned off by the defeat, were turning into small tyrants. In Algeria, they became so greatly feared, so powerful that candidates poured in and at the end of six months, all the small tradesmen and North African Civil Servants joined them. Heads of administrative departments compelled their employees to join. Under one pretext or another, the Postmaster-General of Algiers dismissed members of his staff who had not adhered to the Legion. Those who failed to wear in their buttonhole the badge shaped like a flat iron were unlikely to get promotion. The demands of Legionnaires had priority accorded them by governmental institutions, and these were numerous, supply and distribution committees, transport services, travellers' grants, etc. . . . Members and families were advised to deal with affiliated dealers. Firms were recommended to obtain supplies from wholesalers who showed an 'interest' in the movement. So, even though their enthusiasm was moderate, all traders, industrialists, middle men, manufacturers, wholesalers joined the Legion. Every café proprietor anxious to make money claimed to belong to it. Thus, gradually, the Legion came to take the place that freemasonry had held before Vichy suppressed it for similar reasons, but on a much vaster, more cynical scale.

Under cover of the Legion, shady business was transacted. M. Yves Chatel set the example: owner of refrigerating machines, he rounded up sheep, which his confidential agent, Canavaggio, a well-known collaborator, sent to Spain and Italy. The Legion conferred profitable patronages and was a cover of perfect respectability.<sup>1</sup> It was a jar with two handles. On the one clung the people who belonged formerly to

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Richard, who ran Air Afrique and was threatened with arrest for attempting to reach England, hid for months in Casablanca. He had grown a beard and replaced his rosette of the Legion of Honour by the emblem of the Legion, a better guarantee in the eyes of the police.

the P.P.F., to the P.S.F., all retired sergants who longed to march in line again, those who were hostile to Britain and ayenged Joan of Arc on Fridays by reading *Gringoire*, the contemptible weekly which was the chief exponent of fascism and anglophobia, all those who approved Hitler's order. On the other were the great majority of opportunists who to-day have become Gaullists, then turn to-morrow honorary communists if their interest runs that way — like those good Christians who go to church once a year at Easter to make sure of being received in Paradise.

Though the masses were inert, weak, oblivious, the people at the head<sup>1</sup> knew where they were going and how they were to reach their goal. Small notices decorated the walls of the Headquarters of the Legion:

If anyone listens to the Gaullists' radio, tell your leader.

If you hear anyone speaking against the Marshal, tell your leader.

If you know anyone who runs the black market, tell your leader.

It is your duty to do so.

Spying, sneaking, denouncing others had become the system of government. Personal resentments could be settled with complete impunity. It was no longer sufficient to 'walk straight' under the rule of the jovial old man of Vichy, one had to 'think straight'.

I knew a well-meaning man, father of three children, who, one day, said in a somewhat loud and exasperated voice in front of some 'friends', 'Pétain is an old dodderer . . .'

Next day he was arrested, questioned, put in jail. He sought the advice of a barrister. The latter said at once, shaking his head, 'I wish you had killed someone. It would be casier to defend you.'

In the market squares, it was sufficient to grab by the sleeve one of the Legionnaires strolling casually about in order to have a dealer arrested should he be selling goods at too high a price.<sup>2</sup>

The Legion ramp was the height of absurdity. Soon it was to have its own stall in the market, better supplied than the rest. It was a legalizing of the Black Market for the special benefit of the sympathizers. Because in the meantime, another organization had sprung up: 'the friends of the Legion'. Battalions of cadets, boys and girls, were seen promenading on

<sup>1</sup> It was the Legion who organized propaganda for the exchange and departure of Arab unemployed in North Africa towards the work-yards of the Todt organization.

<sup>2</sup> To give a legal appearance, the Legionnaires were sworn-in in great numbers.

Sundays through the streets of Algiers in berets and white blouses, singing, in high-pitched unbroken voices:

Marshal, we are at your service,  
It is you who have given us hope.  
Our country will be born again,  
It is you who have saved our France.<sup>1</sup>

When the native population was enrolled in the Legion, their zeal was unlimited.

One morning, our Arab postman announced that his wife had had a son. I congratulated him, and asked what it was to be called, expecting him to say some such name as Ahmed or Rachid. Not a bit of it.

'Pétain', he replied, smiling broadly.

The Marshal sent him a telegram, and from that day on he wore the emblem of Vichy, the *Francisque*.

This emblem was to be seen everywhere. So were portraits of the Marshal. It was like a form of mass insanity, of bewilderment, of frenzy. Traders, no longer having goods to show in their windows, still exposed the portrait of the Marshal, and that without ironical intent. In the restaurants, the astonishingly lifeless eye of the Head of the State watched over us as we sat drinking our imitation coffee.

One day, at the Taverne Alsacienne, I saw a high Civil Servant attached to the Weygand delegation, go up, his patience at an end, his nerves on edge, to the inevitable portrait and tear it in two. After that, relieved, content, he calmly walked to the bar and left his visiting card, amidst the silent consternation of the other customers.<sup>2</sup>

This was typical of the illogical acts which people committed one fine day, with no more reason than they had had the day before or the day before that, simply because, after months of repressed rancour, subdued exasperation, of a permanent revolt of the mind, saturation point was suddenly reached.

But on the whole, individual gestures occurred only too rarely among

<sup>1</sup> Maréchal nous voilà  
Tu nous a redonné l'espérance.  
La Patrie renaîtra  
C'est bien Toi le sauveur de la France.

<sup>2</sup> A week later, he was sent to an outpost in Morocco in disgrace.

the self-centred people of Algeria, alien to high ideals, always ready to bow to the reigning authority of the moment.

Let it not be forgotten either that North Africa was being fed almost exclusively on Vichy propaganda, on Vichy news-reels, on the Vichy radio. A lie repeated often enough becomes a self-evident truth. Local papers saw to it, following the instructions of a censorship which presumed on its duties, that war communiqués would be passed in the following order: first the German, then the Italian, the American and lastly the British. Russian and Gaullist statements were not to be mentioned. When General Leclerc or General Koenig had impressive successes, the official texts were mutilated and they were vaguely attributed to Allied troops.

When the R.A.F. bombed the Renault factories, the papers were forced to say 'the south-west suburbs of Paris were bombed'. Parisians knew what was in the south-west of their town. But the Algerians refused to learn, showing their disapproval.

The Legion also interfered with the Press.<sup>1</sup> Papers were made to print notices, communiqués; a whole publicity campaign was launched. The editors dared not refuse. George Claude<sup>2</sup>, the pseudo-scientist, spoke in Algiers of 'Our only chance'; it was obvious what chance; the Legion, presiding at the lecture, ordered it to be boosted in the press, and forced eminent people to attend, threatening to denounce them in Vichy within forty-eight hours as 'indifferent', should they abstain.

Sometimes the Legion behaved in a completely ludicrous manner. Cretins ruled, spreading through Pétain's France on the wave of hypocrisy.<sup>3</sup> The 'prude elders' of the Legion decided one day that Paul

<sup>1</sup> Of the three daily papers published in Algiers, only the *Dépêche* was openly collaborationist. Yet the *Dernières Nouvelles*, thought to be more straightforward, belonged to the same owner, Emmanuel Robbe, who allowed a certain freedom to some of his contributors, hoping thus to furnish an alibi on both sides. *L'Echo d'Alger* behaved better, although it praised the National Revolution.

<sup>2</sup> A personal friend of Bunau-Varilla, he had a regular column reserved for him in the *Matin*. He took advantage of his travels through Europe where he gave lectures on liquid air, to play the part of a political agent, for he was in constant touch with the leaders of the Fascist party and also a friend of Ciano and Ribbentrop.

<sup>3</sup> One of the virtuous decisions taken by Vichy which most affected Algeria was the prohibition of the sale of anisette-cordial. As was to be expected the price increased three or four times, as the bottle was sold under the counter. It was said in Vichy that Pétain in person had asked for the abolition of apéritifs containing more than 16 per cent alcohol. On several occasions he returned from his walks through Vichy much annoyed by the sight of café terraces filled with customers.



Reboux was unfit to lecture in Algiers. Paul Reboux—*horresco-referens*—was the author of a book entitled *Le nouveau Savoir Aimer*. . . . On the day appointed for his talk, a 'spontaneous' manifestation was organized. Later a revival of *Phi Phi* was the occasion of a new display of prudishness. The audience overcame with legitimate anger, having paid for their seats, went for the Legionnaires tooth and nail. In the wings, a few young artfuls saw the walkers-on in a close-up. The evening ended in jail, but *Phi Phi* was banned. Jazz was banned too. So was dancing; banned, too, all frivolous papers. And two-piece bathing suits.

For different reasons, British and American films were prohibited. Too long and enthusiastic and significant was the applause which greeted certain scenes in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, *Good-Bye Mr. Chips* and *Ruggles of Red Gap*. People sat through two or three performances to clap at the right moments. From then on, only French films and German shorts, surprisingly second-rate, were shown.

But the Legion could not forbid everything. The Censor became stricter, but the minds of the public grew more subtle. In articles, in apparently orthodox speeches, in the setting out of a title, in a ludicrous extract from an Italian paper, published without comment in *Candide*, double meanings, hints were sought after and discovered.

Subversive talk spread like fire. An orchestra became inordinately popular because it played a few bars of the Lambeth Walk in a pot-pourri. This clinging to condemned ideas and by the thinnest and most tenuous of links was a trifle ridiculous, but rather pathetic. The only positive aspect of this masked resistance was the B.B.C., so difficult to catch, so often jammed. It was listened to secretly, people were afraid of their concierge, of their neighbours, of passers-by. But after a new song had been heard from London, ten people in the trolley-bus could be heard whistling unconcernedly the tune:

Ils sont dans nos vignes les salauds,  
Ils sont dans nos vignes.  
Ils ont bu tout notre bon vin.

What a relief, at twenty, to whistle tunes, to escape official sanction, not to be resigned, not to regret mistakes one has not committed, not to praise in a servile manner.

Such was life in Algiers during these eighteen months. Both loathsome

## WEYGAND, VICEROY OF AFRICA

and intense. Armistice commissions. American consuls. The Legion. The Black Market. Gradually increasing poverty. The enforced National Revolution. The underground movement. Police. Prisons. A disarmed and hesitating army. It was Tartuffe in power. A great, inert, colourless mob, a crowd of indifferent and cowardly people who were to side with the Allies when they landed, as easily as they had fallen in with Vichy, when they pretended to stand guard over prostrate France.

## CRYSTALLIZATION OF RESISTANCE

*Le temps des armes n'est pas celui des lois*

JULIUS CAESAR

AN outside observer can form a coherent synthesis — and even draw conclusions — but he must take the trouble of considering the general situation in Algeria at that time. He must take into account separate, small, apparently disconnected facts, bits of evidence closely bound up with daily life.

For instance a few insubordinates fought on in their own sphere, that others escaped it, that rebels flared up and committed certain foolish actions, such as attacking officers of the Armistice Commissions<sup>1</sup> or stealing an old tub to take to sea: all this was already significant in itself.

The spirit of protest was not dead. Not everybody thought that we must pay for the sins of France, that the only sane policy left was blind acceptance and simple faith. In short, North Africa was like a ripened fruit, ready to fall from the branch. A few men discovered this with satisfaction and astonishment. They drew from this the most hopeful conclusions. But they also knew that co-ordinated action was essential in order to give character to the resistance which was timidly taking shape. There were more important things to do than taking enormous risks to cross a frontier. . . .

Besides, individual acts of rebellion are of little moment. They hinder rather than help the Allied cause. Lack of precautions, insufficient preparations sometimes led the Vichy police to discover some small group, the members of which were thrown into prison. Those were precious elements which, maybe, would one day be needed.

In French North Africa, then fallow land, but where the seed of revolution might one day germinate, a few people came to these conclusions. They did not know each other. Often they were kept apart by

<sup>1</sup> In Tunis, an Italian officer was thrown into the sea. In Algiers, several officers were left on the pavement, somewhat the worse for wear, having been caught in a sham fight during which significance of the blows dealt by the antagonists was not lost on everybody.

mistrust, if they did not simply ignore each other's existence. It is, at present, impossible to determine where and in which group of people was born the idea of resistance in North Africa.<sup>1</sup> It was in the air, so to speak. It is a fact that it immediately crystallized round the Americans, culminating at last on the night of November 8th — the peak of the conspiracy.

I asked one of the men who had worked from the beginning why he had relied on the Americans and not, for instance, on the British or the Gaullists. His answer was clear:

'Most of the population was pro-American. For a long time, Vichy propaganda had been directed against England and had spared the United States. The French army fought in Syria against the British. The navy had gone through Mers-el-Kebir. All Gaullists, all who were pro-British were pro-American. The converse was not always true.

'If a landing had been attempted by the Gaullists, it would have meant the outbreak of a dreadful civil war.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, though the denial of defeat and the spirit of resistance of General de Gaulle had set the course for our movement, at the beginning it was no more Gaullist than American.'<sup>3</sup>

These words were both true and false. Amongst all those in authority, those Gaullists in spirit — whether royalists, communists, radicals or socialists — some showed themselves later as sincere and genuine followers of General de Gaulle... when they had discovered the de Gaulle movement. Others, on the contrary, and often for the self-same reasons, were ardent adversaries.

In 1941 and 1942, they were content to be patriots, no more, and this was their only link. Together they fought for the liberation of France.

One point which my informant left in the dark and which is worth mentioning, is this: only the consular staff of the United States had the advantages of easy contacts with the outside world, of an inviolable diplomatic bag, of the immunity ensured by complete freedom of

<sup>1</sup> As in France, in Africa the Deuxième Bureau never accepted defeat and immediately after the Armistice began preparing for revenge. This was natural. But to present the situation in so sketchy a way would be to falsify the truth which was much more complex. In the Deuxième Bureau, as everywhere, there was the entire scale of opinions from the uncompromising resistance to collaborators.

<sup>2</sup> It was not with impunity that two years of propaganda such as that of *Gringoire* had branded General de Gaulle and his entourage. The hatred of the officers repatriated from Syria to North Africa against the Gaullists was extreme.

<sup>3</sup> In French North Africa, as in France, confusion reigned. Vichy dubbed all those who resisted or rebelled indifferently 'Gaullists', 'communists' or 'Jewish freemasons'.

movement. They played dexterously on Vichy's fear of a diplomatic incident with the United States. In actual fact, they could do as they pleased in North Africa, so long as they 'played the game' properly.

It is, therefore, understandable that in the movement which was taking shape and which was finally to prepare the landing, the American consuls immediately became the common denominator of these various fractions. Sometimes they put groups of people in touch with one another, groups which, through the force of circumstances, were to become one. Often, on the contrary, they allowed groups to ignore each other, and themselves remained only in contact with the leaders. These leaders kept them informed more or less as to the progress of the plans and of practical achievements, but they did not tell them everything. The diplomats, for their part, were wary, deliberately they ignored the relative importance of these groups, working only with the leaders; they did not want to estrange themselves from any, but when the day came, they would make their choice. Moreover, at that time, they still did not know the exact plans of President Roosevelt and the American H.Q.

After an experiment which almost ended in disaster, they became even more cautious. In April 1941, Mr. Robert Murphy had taken part — in agreement with Admiral Leahy's departments, in Vichy, in the sketching out of a plan for preliminary action. A French officer, the Commandant Loustalot-Lacaud, undertook to have the document in question brought from Vichy to Algiers.<sup>1</sup> A few officers met in an apartment of the Hôtel Alexandra, at an apparently inoffensive social gathering. This hotel, one of the best situated on the heights of the Colline Mustapha, was in a secluded position. There were to be found Commandant d'Artois, of the Commandement Supérieur de l'Air, and subsequently leader of one of the most active resistance groups; Commandant Bauffre, married to an Englishwoman, who in November 1942 became chief of General

<sup>1</sup> In the autumn of 1937, when the French police were making careful inquiries about the *Cagoule* (the clandestine 'Hooded Men' organization) and many surprising things came to light, amongst other widespread ramifications, it was discovered with amazement that one of the main threads led to the Commandant Loustalot-Lacaud, Marshal Pétain's aide-de-camp, 'an eccentric man whom the Marshal favoured' (so Pertinax). The matter was naturally hushed up. Loustalot-Lacaud was subsequently placed at the head of a battalion of Chasseurs Alpains. After the Armistice, on several occasions, traces of the *Cagoule* were to be found mixed up with the French resistance movement. In fact the *Cagoule*, or what was left of it, split into two groups: one of sincere French patriots. In Africa it was publicly said that Henri d'Astier de la Vigerie — who will be much talked of later — was a member. In London it was known that Colonel de W., head of General de Gaulle's Deuxième Bureau, had also belonged to it.

## CRYSTALLIZATION OF RESISTANCE

Graud's military cabinet, Commandant Faye, Lieutenant-Colonel de Rozières Also a Belgian officer, Major Vanderstichelen-Rogier <sup>1</sup> A few ladies were also present it was officially a tea-party

But unfortunately a police inspector had landed, straight from Vichy, with orders to form an anti-Gaullist brigade in Algiers His name was Bègue <sup>2</sup> He was full of ardour Having heard that a plot was afoot, and without knowing exactly what it was all about, he had the hotel surrounded by his men Following the most classical tradition, these men burst into the drawing-room, keeping their hats on their heads Between the tea cups the documents were spread Everybody was nabbed, but fortunately the head of the special police brigade of the territory, Achary — one of the faithful who conspired for the landing — was willing to turn a blind eye <sup>3</sup> Forty-eight hours later they were all set free Only Bauffre and Faye, chosen as scapegoats, were to remain nearly a year in prison and were afterwards obliged to retire from the army

Fortunately — not to say providentially, for Providence did not play much of a part in this business, nor chance either — most of the compromising documents were smuggled away and lodged in safe custody in the records of the Commandement Supérieur de l'Air, thanks to the zeal of the Deuxième Bureau

This serious alarm confirmed the Americans in their caution All possibilities of leakages, of treason had to be reduced as far as possible But the incident also convinced them that it was necessary to have as much support, as much complicity as possible in all quarters, especially in official ones, amongst the police and in the Deuxième Bureau So, when they got into touch 'through mutual friends' with Henri d'Astier de la

<sup>1</sup> Major Vanderstichelen Rogier had brought to Africa under the nose of the Germans a vast amount of Belgian aeronautical material He succeeded in keeping it hidden to the end from the Armistice commissions and handed it over to the Air Command in Algiers For months this Belgian officer daily risked being sent to prison for harbouring young compatriots who wished to reach England He arranged for the departure of several dozen either illegally or after having obtained their exemption from military service

<sup>2</sup> Besides the already existing police Vichy had created in Algiers under the command of Commissaire Delgove, a section of political police to which the anti-Gaullist brigade of Bègue was to be attached

<sup>3</sup> Achary after this interference and a few more of the same kind was to be deprived of his job and sent to Setif in disgrace It was he who had had a manifestation against the Armistice Commission organized, after which they asked for the protection of the French police Achary by chance was put in charge of their safety Thus could he watch them closely

Vigerie, he impressed them greatly, quite apart from any question of personality, by his connections, his name and his position.

The example of the d'Astier group is in point of fact a model, a perfect example of a resistance group, born spontaneously, from the ideas of a few men, around whom gathered other friends resolved to resist. The group soon formed a sufficiently coherent whole, with plans advanced enough to be useful. Circumstances helped, and very soon the originator of the idea had under his orders an entirely devoted faction which first rallied, then absorbed, groups less developed, or less numerous or led by less outstanding personalities. During the days of November, d'Astier was in fact the hidden leader of most of the elements resisting in Algiers.

When the idea first came to him, Henri d'Astier de la Vigerie was an officer in the Deuxième Bureau at Oran. He was a Cagoulard; people repeated it and he did not try to hide the fact. His innate taste for intrigue, his urge to make trouble, to act as an outlaw, to expend his strength recklessly, made him a kind of musketeer quite out of place in our century. An aristocrat sprung from an ancient line, he was the *enfant terrible* of his family. He willingly talks of his disagreements with his two brothers.<sup>1</sup> He was inclined towards the Right, of course, but he did not conceal that he was much more royalist than monarchist. His personal tendencies lead him to devote himself more to a man than to an idea. That is why he soon reconciled, without any qualms of conscience, his devotion to the Comte de Paris with that to General de Gaulle — who seemed to him, both of them, the perfect patrons — in the Roman sense of the word. To say the least of it, viewed in cold blood, this seems odd.

Henri d'Astier is more than a condottiere. He is completely sincere, entirely disinterested, attached with every fibre of his being to the land of France. He suffers to see France in eclipse and the salt of the land — her best sons — losing its savour. He has the character of a leader and its essential capacity: to arouse passionate devotion around him. Sometimes he has done mad things, extravagant, incredible ones, but never second-rate.

<sup>1</sup> One is Général d'Astier, a close collaborator of General de Gaulle who left France after November 11th, 1942. The other, Emmanuel d'Astier, of the French resistance movement, later became Commissaire à l'Intérieur in Algiers and briefly held the portfolio of Home Affairs after the liberation of Paris. Resistance is almost a family matter with the d'Astiers. Henri d'Astier is 42 years old. He joined up at 17 and was given at the end of the 1914-1918 war the Croix de Guerre, with several mentions in dispatches and the Legion d'Honneur (military division). He was wounded. Between the two wars he showed great activity in French political circles of the Right. He was a contributor to *Action Française*.

## CRYSTALLIZATION OF RESISTANCE

In 1941, he felt that something might be done. But what direction should this action take? In March, through his friend, Captain Jobelot, he got to know Roger Carcassonne, a young Algerian industrialist. These two men, whom differences of race, origin, environment, character, political opinions seemed bound to keep apart, became friends. Both were harnessed to the same rebellious resolve. A few friends joined them, José Abouliker (who brought with him his group of Algiers already formed), Pierre Carcassonne, a Deuxième Bureau lieutenant, a priest, the abbé Cordier. This first small seditious group grew day by day. Thanks to Cordier's persuasion, another ecclesiastic, the Reverend Father Thierry, lent his influence to the organization. An important adhesion was that of the leader of the Chantiers de la Jeunesse, Van Hecke, already in agreement with the idea. His action was to be an essential one in the organization and the Chantiers de Jeunesse were to play a primary role in the preparations for the landing. Besides, a few weeks later, Henri d'Astier put on the cream coloured shirt and the green beret which gave him far greater freedom of movement.

During their first exchange of views, the conspirators agreed on one concrete point: the only hope for useful action was through the help of the Americans. D'Astier, who had begun to form his ranks, had to get into touch with them.

One day, at Carcassonne's house, he met Jean Rigault. Although the two men did not know each other well, they had nevertheless evolved on parallel lines in France, in the sphere of the extreme Right. Jean Rigault was the reflection of Lemaigre-Dubreuil, whose dummy he was. He was the editor of the *Jour-Echo de Paris* in 1940, after the defeat, when Lemaigre-Dubreuil became owner.<sup>1</sup> After Montoire, Rigault left France and settled in French North Africa. Lemaigre-Dubreuil allowed him four thousand francs a month, for a year, whilst waiting. Waiting for what? Who can tell?

Jacques Lemaigre-Dubreuil,<sup>2</sup> head of an important factory for fats,

<sup>1</sup> The *Jour-Echo de Paris* was, moreover, with *Figaro* and *Progrès* in Lyons, held to have a 'resisting' spirit in the non-occupied zone. It was banned by Vichy.

<sup>2</sup> For years Jacques Lemaigre-Dubreuil, maker of the Huiles Lesieur 'which make good cooking even better', owner of the Printemps shops, sought to play a dominant role in France. In 1933, under the second radical coalition, the ratepayers voted as President of their movement, this rich young man, said to be full of energy. He willingly accepted, for he hoped, by means of this group, to lead a life of political action. He craved for honours, had immense ambition. He was not ashamed of being rich. He flooded the newspapers with monumental



took charge of transferring his factories, his raw materials to North Africa. Mr. Robert Murphy, as long as the former was in France, helped him. Finally Vichy gave him the necessary permits.

A curious partnership, that of the 'righteous' d'Astier and Jean Rigault, who dragged his boss in his shadow. For Rigault immediately joined the conspirators. He was an ideal recruit: silent, superlatively intelligent, he never raised his voice in their friendly quarrels. One might almost have thought him shy. He was able, without too much trouble, and this was an advantage, to travel between Algiers and France. And, on top of this, he undertook the keeping of records, the most wearisome work for conspirators:

'If you would like me to, I have time . . .'

It was he, *deus ex machina*, who offered to act as agent between them and the Americans:

'I will talk to Lemaigre-Dubreuil. With his connections . . .'

And when d'Astier met John Knox for the first time, it was, in fact, through the industrialist's help.

In this conversation, John Knox left the initiative to his questioner, and in no way compromised himself:

'Naturally a consulate collects, in these troubled times, all it can to make a landing, an intervention possible. But it is a long way from this to immediate action. . . . Do not get carried away. . . . We will talk again later. For the time being, go on as you are doing.'

John Knox's answer was worthy of a Norman peasant, but his action was in the best tradition of an American businessman. He collected information, studied the question, referred to 'proper authorities'. One day he informed the conspirators that they could count on the unofficial

communiqués. When they were frowned on, the publicity agent of the paper which had displeased him found next day that important publicity contracts had been cancelled. On February 6th, 1934, on the Place de la Concorde, a group of people demonstrated against the Republic; Lemaigre was amongst those who endeavoured to set fire to the Admiralty. From inside, Admiral Darlan had the fire put out and saved the records. Later, when men of the 6th February formed a group under the name of Secret Committee for Revolutionary Action, the famous C.S.A.R., Lemaigre-Dubreuil was found amongst the Cagoulauds unmasked by the Police. Taking advantage of the defeat, from June 24th to July 10th, 1940, these same men murdered the Republic. Lemaigre-Dubreuil left them. Their game coincided too well with that of Germany, and it was not Germany who was going to win the war, but the United States. Could it be said also that the Unilever Trust, against which he waged such violent battles, had some influence on his choice when he rejected Vichy and the National Revolution? On arrival in Africa, Lemaigre-Dubreuil cherished a secret hope of issuing three editions of the *Jour-Echo de Paris*.

support of the United States representatives and that these also counted on them.

From that moment the intrigue ceased to seem mere fantasy and took shape. Lemaigre-Dubreuil was still the vital link: he organized dinners. Round a dinner table, the conspirators met the American consuls in comparative security. In the drawing-room of this modern Rastignac they met the French 'gentry' which had fled to Algiers. They felt their pulse. And pulses are tell-tales after an old brandy. . . .

The conspirators met, sometimes in a small café, sometimes at one or another's house. They often met in the last place where one would look for rebels: in a dress-shop, Elysée Couture, owned by two of them, Guy and Elie Cohen. Often the three-panelled mirror of the trying-on room reflected the image of a calm, tall and charming man, that of Mr. Robert Murphy, and another, restless and always in motion, that of John Knox, his unofficial coadjutor.

Henri d'Astier finally gathered around him many resisters: army men relieved of their duties by the Armistice, chiefs of police, officials, the clergy, intellectuals and business men, students and sometimes ordinary workers. Other groups, bent towards the same goal, were at work, linked up by the American connection. Even afterwards, it is impossible to establish a hard and fast classification. Names stand out, such as that of the leader of the Chantiers de Jeunesse, Van Hecke, of whom I spoke earlier; of Tarbe de Saint-Hardouin, ex-chargé d'affaires in Berlin after the departure of M. François-Poncet and one of those who negotiated the Weygand-Murphy agreement; General Mast, who had been a fellow-prisoner of General Giraud at Koenigstein, commander of the Algiers Division;<sup>1</sup> Colonel Baril, former leader of the Deuxième Bureau under General Georges during the 'phoney war' at La Ferté-sous-Jouarre; the Général de Corps aérien Bouscat, the youngest general of his rank in France, former chef de cabinet of Paul Painlevé and Guy la Chambre,<sup>2</sup> who 'worked' in collaboration with Commandant d'Artois, already mentioned; Colonel Lelong, who became leader of the training school

<sup>1</sup> In 1944 Résident Général of France in Tunisia.

<sup>2</sup> Though under 50, General Bouscat had been forced to retire by Vichy. He was suspected of being a patriot and, in spite of orders, had organized the mass departure to Africa of the remains of the French Air Force in June 1940, so that the fight might be continued. This was more than a black mark against him . . . General Bouscat was Commander-in-Chief of the French Air Force in 1944.

for the Chantiers de Jeunesse at Fort de l'Eau; General de Montsabert, who afterwards organized the Corps Francs d'Afrique which were to cover themselves with glory during the campaign of Tunisia; Colonel Jousse, town major, commander of the garrison of Algiers, who played an important part at headquarters when the crucial moment came; the chief of the special police brigade of the territory, Achiary; Bringard, the local director of the Sureté; the Commissaire central Esqueyré; the head of Security in the General Government, Muscatelli<sup>1</sup>; the former mayor of Algiers, M. Brunel; Doctor Aboulker, leader of the radical-socialist party, professor in the Faculty of Medicine at Algiers; Pierre Alexandre, industrialist; Doctor Morali; Doctor Raphael Aboulker, conseiller général; Professor Henri Duboucher; Professor René Capitant<sup>2</sup>, of the University of Strasbourg, and director of the clandestine paper *Combat*, whose editor was Jean Castet; a recently arrived member of the French organization of resistance, Liberation: Louis Joxe,<sup>3</sup> journalist, then teacher at the Lycée in Algiers; Doctor Seror was working at Miliana and Jean Bensaid at Blida.

And there were many others whom I forget or whom I never knew, working with the same zeal, each in his own sphere and locus, associated in the work of conspiracy, work for which they were in no way marked out and which, at rock-bottom, many felt to be somewhat unreal. Coming from all political fields, they were under an illusion about the length of their association, for they were well aware of its precarious character.

As one of them said: 'It is a pity, but after the landing, you'll see, we shall have to end by getting rid of d'Astier, though he is a decent chap.'

Soon there were several hundred 'decent chaps', divided as was France, by quarrels and even by political hatreds, yet associated in the common interest of the Nation.

In November 1942, the most accurate estimates show that the numbers had increased: there were thousands of sympathizers on whom to count, when the time came, in Algeria, in Tunisia and in Morocco.

All these people, of secondary importance, who played minor roles, were ready to give enthusiastic support, even when told nothing. They had Faith. Their hearts were pledged to this patriotic enterprise. They

<sup>1</sup> Prefect of Algiers till June 1944.

<sup>2</sup> Minister in the de Gaulle's government in France.

<sup>3</sup> Secretary of the National Committee of Liberation.

knew vaguely that something was going to happen and came forward to volunteer for dangerous missions, for prison or for fighting. For weeks, for months on end, these thousands kept the secret. They were organized on the Communist pattern, forming small cells which knew nothing of each other. In case of treachery only a few ran the risk of discovery. No conspirator knew all the other conspirators, not even d'Astier, not even the record-keeper, Rigault, who had in his keeping only the names of the leaders. Mr. Murphy was not kept informed as to internal organization.

For instance, one day José Aboulker, the organizer of shock groups, was asked to join by Pierre Alexandre, who never for a moment imagined that he was speaking to his leader. José Aboulker gravely referred to his studies and 'fucked it', causing Alexandre to look on him with some contempt.

On all sides complicities were being laid. As orders could only be given by word of mouth, it was essential to have emissaries who could travel with ease throughout North Africa. And it was not an easy matter to obtain entrance visas into Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia; already at the end of 1941, in Algeria itself, no movements were allowed outside a certain radius except with a special pass. Forged papers would have been too dangerous. The conspirators, rapidly becoming experts in the matter of illegal action, did not want to take undue risks. So it was with official travelling permits, under the auspices of the Chantiers de Jeunesse — permits made out on official French paper — that they travelled between Rabat, Algiers, Tunis and Vichy, plotting against the French State.

As in a jig-saw puzzle, the material organization was put together. The brothers Lavaysse, who owned a garage in the Rue Michelet, held cars at the disposal of the movement. Colonel Jousse obtained arms — as an initial contribution. They were bricked up in the garage. The Americans said that, at the right moment, they would complete this arsenal. In point of fact, during the last weeks, they gave out only a few Colts, promising each day that ships with ample supplies were due. But it was thanks to the Americans that a clandestine transmitting station was fitted up in Oran which enabled permanent contact to be maintained with Gibraltar.

During this time, 'agents' were at work. Cards were made out concerning everybody of importance: prefects, mayors, general secretaries, sub-prefects, political and police chiefs, heads of military departments, generals, colonels.

Five influential members of the fascist P.P.F. (Parti Populaire Français) came each month to draw five thousand francs for valuable information given.

The police were magnificently fooled. Through a curious coincidence, when sent to search people's houses, the police always hit upon the homes of honest bourgeois, on inoffensive offices where portraits of the Marshal were displayed. Correspondence seized was always harmless, mostly commercial letters, and the police always returned empty-handed.

Vichy — as I have already mentioned — feeling that North Africa was seething, had created a special anti-Gaullist brigade.<sup>1</sup> Here again everybody 'against' Vichy was labelled Gaullist. Inspector Bègue gave the conspirators a rough time, and the unfortunate lads who fell into his hands know what it cost to provoke his suspicion. Great precautions had to be taken, meeting places changed and meetings made as infrequent as possible. Soon, moreover, the conspirators were suspecting traps everywhere and seeing a sleuth in every stranger. But this did not prevent alarms occurring. One of them was almost the end of the entire plot. A small meeting was bowled over when a new arrival threw out the announcement:

'Roquemore has been arrested.'

Immediately questions were showered down on him:

'Who told you? Did he speak? Who arrested him? Has he been questioned? Where is he?'

M. de Roquemore had in fact been arrested by Bègue in Tunisia, on that very afternoon. He did not talk, but an engagement book containing many names was found on him.

The announcement made a great commotion. Immediately precautions were taken, the wife of the prisoner was told, and thanks to Achiary, the people involved were also given warning. All available friends in the police forces were put on the job. Documents had to be placed in safety and further meetings postponed. Bernard Karsenty left for Oran to act as liaison officer.

In a word, the whole security mechanism of the organization came into play. Some of the conspirators, who were compromised, were dispatched to Morocco, others went into retirement in some country houses.

<sup>1</sup> At the Hotel du Parc, surprise was felt when Weygand was recalled, at the lack of reaction in Algiers. But it was Weygand himself who had killed all enthusiasm by the farewell broadcast which he had been forced to make.

Others again were literally kidnapped and relegated willy-nilly and without any explanation to places of safety. Such was the case of Doctor Solal, one of the best-known general practitioners in French North Africa, who was made to live in one small room, for five months, at a stone's-throw from his own house in Oran. He was unable even to peep through the window for fear of being reported by neighbours or passers-by who knew him by sight. At the end of five months, an Allied ship came to collect those who had so hastily been withdrawn from circulation.

Inspector Bègue, very pleased with his haul, slept soundly. He had sent out his police sleuth-hounds on twenty different quests and established files on each of the names found in de Roquemore's note-book. He announced all this to Vichy and sent off the files. And he awaited orders which could not fail to arrive.

He is still awaiting them, for of all the documents sent from Algiers, only three arrived in Vichy. As though on purpose, these concerned three men definitely out of reach.

The proof, whether you liked it or not, was there: the organization worked to perfection. But there remained a vital question, a question more important than even they imagined: the ship was ready, but a pilot had to be found. Not only a pilot, but also a flag. There lay the problem and the cause of many differences.

The undisputed Leader, the man who would have all the votes, must be able by his name, his reputation and the vigour of his leadership to rally the Army, the Navy and the Air Force. There could be no question of a man who bore any responsibility for the defeat, nor one who had collaborated with the conqueror. He must have the approval of the Americans, of the British, and not have shown any signs of anti-Gaullism. And this phoenix, this man of high character and great reputation must have remained daring enough of spirit to hazard his reputation and his life on a scheme which might fail, which was based solely on more or less fluctuating chances and on the action of young people whose patriotism could not be doubted but whose experience could.

Of course, there was de Gaulle. But de Gaulle, who inevitably occurred to people's minds, was rejected from the start, and once and for all, by the Americans. The official reason for their ostracism was that the very name of the General would place half the Air Force, two-thirds of the Army and all the Navy against the operation. This argument was not

without value or weight. In their own ranks, the conspirators knew that there would be some systematic opposition. . . .

'De Gaulle? You want another Dakar?' the Americans said. 'You really want to see French blood flow. We prefer to economize American blood.'

General Weygand's evasion of the issue had been a great disappointment to Mr. Murphy. Beforehand already the ex-Commander-in-Chief had been sounded by indirect means. But Mr. Roosevelt's envoy did not dream for one moment that a positive proposal, made personally, could be refused. Yet, as we have seen, the second attempt was no more successful than the first. Weygand's son, who was then approached, also refused.

So a leader had to be looked for elsewhere. Why not amongst the conspirators themselves, after all? Thus the name of General Bethouard was mentioned. General Bethouard, who led the Alpine Regiments at Narvik, returned via England but refused to join General de Gaulle in June 1940 and was repatriated to Morocco; here he was given a command and, a year and a half later, had seen the light and become a Gaullist in spirit.<sup>1</sup>

Would General Bethouard be the Leader, the Inspirer?

'No,' Mr. Robert Murphy decreed. 'He has neither enough repute, nor enough importance in the army. He has not a name enough known to awake popular enthusiasm. He is too young.'<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Robert D. Murphy was still thinking about and regretting Weygand's candidature, as he considered him to be the ideal man.

It was at this time, on April 17th, that General Giraud escaped from prison. His escape was known while he was still in Switzerland. Nobody knew his plans. What was he proposing to do? To join de Gaulle? To go to Africa? No one knew except General Giraud and the French Deuxième Bureau. The latter had good reason to have very definite ideas on the subject. The secretaries of the consulate sent coded telegrams to the United States Embassy in Berne. There was even at one time talk

<sup>1</sup> His first act, after the Allied landing, was to send from Gibraltar to General Legentilhomme, war commissioner for General de Gaulle, a telegram in which he pledged his allegiance. As did many others, and not without reason, General Bethouard thought General de Gaulle's arrival in Africa to be imminent.

<sup>2</sup> Coming from the representative of a young people, this statement must seem curious. In 'their' war, they placed obstacles in the path of elderly colonels, having seen the necessity of having young generals. But when the future of France was at stake, they negotiated with Pétain, invited Weygand, raised up Darlan and Giraud to power.

of placing a 'plane at the disposal of the General, if he wanted one. But General Giraud did not want one. He wanted to speak to Marshal Pétain, as soldier to soldier. So he went to France, and was soon bitterly disappointed. His change of attitude was closely followed in Algiers. Had not the time come to see how the land lay? But who was to undertake this delicate business? Who? Naturally the good, the invaluable, the ever-ready M. Lemaigre-Dubreuil who, as luck would have it, had actually been attached to Giraud's H.Q. at St. Omer during the phoney war as a captain in the cavalry reserve.

So M. Lemaigre-Dubreuil set forth as envoy of the United States of America to General Giraud.<sup>1</sup> When he returned to Algiers, in triumph, it was to announce that the General had agreed in principle. The General, having thought it over, was willing to take over the *military* leadership of the operation. Already, from the very start, there was a misunderstanding which, whether or not on purpose, was perpetuated and which was to mortgage the future heavily.

Although in possession of General Giraud's consent, Mr. Robert Murphy tried once more to rally General Weygand to his point of view. By then the General must have understood, considering he was almost a prisoner of Vichy, of a Vichy which had sacrificed him to the demands of the Reich. His scruples must have vanished since Pierre Laval had returned to power and had proclaimed his faith and hope in a German victory. And by now, Mr. Robert Murphy could give a precise answer, could quote production figures if again asked the question:

'How many men, how many 'planes, how many tanks?'

During the first days of the summer of 1942, Mr. Robert Murphy took up his pilgrim's staff and embarked for France. He was going to knock on the door of the peaceful little retreat at Cagnes, with its cloak of bougainvillia,<sup>2</sup> where the General then lived. He brought him a personal message from President Roosevelt.

<sup>1</sup> Thinking he was doing right, General Giraud returned the compliment. In December 1942 he appointed M. Lemaigre-Dubreuil to act for him in Washington, together with General Bethouard. The Americans did not appreciate the joke. . . .

<sup>2</sup> This interview took place on July 17th, 1942, and it was this which justified the arrest of General Weygand on the day following the landing — if Mr. von Ribbentrop is to be believed exposing the 'treachery' of the ex-Commander-in-Chief in a personal letter sent to Marshal Pétain. In order to excite more the temper of the old Marshal, the German Minister assured him that Mr. Murphy had also suggested to the General to take the place of the Head of the State.



For the last time, power, revenge, glory were being offered to the man in whom one would so much like to see the reflection of Foch, whom he had served so well. But his eyes as they rested on Mr. Murphy showed only the immense sadness of things past. He shrugged his bowed shoulders and in a broken voice he uttered again those words which have become history:

‘At my age one does not become a rebel. . . .’<sup>1</sup>

And he spoke at length about his *Memoirs* which he was busily engaged in writing.

It was he who decided at that moment the installation in power of General Giraud.

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Murphy was very disappointed, for, at the beginning of the interview, Weygand had agreed that the victory of the Allied Nations was certain and the total defeat of Germany a necessity.

## CHAPTER IV

### NEGOTIATIONS AT CHERCHELL

*Ce qui fait la force et la grandeur des Etats-Unis, c'est qu'il y a toujours des Américains pour penser sérieusement à tout*

GEORGES DUHAMEL

At the beginning of October, Redgway Knight, United States vice-consul at Oran, came to see one of the conspirators, Maître Queyrat, a lieutenant in the reserve. For some mysterious purpose he wanted a villa on the Algerian coast. The house must have several rooms and be in an isolated place with a garden giving on to the beach. East of Algiers, Fort de l'Eau or Ain Taya would do; west of the city Tipaza or Cherchell would suit to perfection.

Jean Queyrat set to work cautiously. To rent a villa openly proved too dangerous. Too many questions were asked. Finally he was loaned a villa, some ten miles from Cherchell, owned by one of his friends, M. Jacques Tessier.

On being informed of this, the vice-consul visited the place and gave his approval. The house fulfilled all the necessary conditions. Necessary for what? That we were soon to see.

The owner was asked to get the servants out of the way by October 20th. On the 21st, without any great concern for discretion, a swarm of big American cars passed like a whirlwind through the little town of Cherchell, to the great astonishment of the bowls players in the public square and the card players outside the cafés. Numerous passengers got out of the cars and assembled round the table in M. Tessier's little dining-room. There were present the United States Minister, Mr. Robert Murphy, his colleague, Redgway Knight,<sup>1</sup> looking more like a clergyman than ever, Henri d'Astier de la Vigerie, General Mast, representing his friend Giraud, the leader of the Chantiers de Jeunesse Van Hecke — a thin

<sup>1</sup> Knight had taken John Knox's place with Mr. Robert Murphy after Knox's departure. John Knox had gone to join General Eisenhower in Scotland and finally disembarked at Algiers on November 8th with the American troops.

edition of Albert Sarraut — Jean Rigault, Commandant d'Artois, Bernard Karsenty, responsible for liaison, Colonel Jousse, capitaine de frégate Barjot, who was the only representative of the navy in the plot, Maître Queyrat, Captain Watson, in charge of the security of the enterprise, and finally the owner of the villa, Jacques Tessier, looking after the comfort of his guests.

They waited. Hours went by. From time to time a messenger came back from the beach at the bottom of the garden:

'Still nothing in sight. . . .'

The evening, then the night, passed in anxious, and finally fruitless, suspense. A new day dawned. Everything had to be begun afresh. . . .

On the following day, the 22nd, at nightfall, the same scene was played round the same table. But this time the actors had learned by experience — baskets of bottles had been brought in the boots of the cars. The French officers who were in mufti carried little suitcases. They disappeared and in ten minutes came back in uniform.

Then the vigil began again, this time with less impatience, for precise wireless messages had been received in the course of the day. The expected 'guests' to the number of eight had their hands full, meanwhile, trying to get out of a British submarine which had dropped anchor under cover of darkness in the rough seas within view of the beach. On the previous evening the eight men had rehearsed the operation of launching inflatable rubber boats on terra firma. They got to the beach without grave mishap. Karsenty was waiting to lead them through the pine woods to the villa which could be faintly seen in the shadows. In a neighbouring 'douar' Arab dogs howled in the night. The landing was not devoid of risks for there were regular patrols on 'douairs' — native coastguards — at this spot. The French officer in charge of the region, Lieutenant Lenen, was 'in the know', but the natives might ruin everything.

However, the eight officers armed with sub-machine guns got to the villa without incident. Their leader was General Mark W. Clark, General Eisenhower's chief collaborator. With him were Brigadier General Lemnitzer and Colonel Julius Holmes.<sup>1</sup>

There was no standing on ceremony. The discussions began immediately, on a practical plane, and in a striking atmosphere of confidence

<sup>1</sup> After the landings, Colonel Julius Holmes was to join Mr. Murphy's staff as one of the delegates of the State Department. Later, Brigadier J. Holmes played a big part on the political side in the Liberation of France.

and 'comradeship' according to the expression used to me by one of those present.

The business on hand was to settle the 'technical' details of the landing, on the basis of plans, documents and precise data drawn up after months of effort by the members of the consulate and the conspirators, and to clinch matters with General Giraud. The work was done on a solid basis. The landings had been decided upon; even their scale was no longer in doubt.

'The operation', General Clark declared, 'will be carried out with means exceeding all understanding!'

This declaration made a great impression on all present.

It then remained only to decide on suitable landing places. Plans and ideas were compared and for hours the discussion continued on coast batteries, A.A. batteries, beaches, airfields, supply, possibilities of local aid, future policy, arming of French troops. Nothing could be left unconsidered.

The discussions lasted a whole day and night. The only break was for meals.

Meanwhile, although the submarine had not been noticed, the consular cars provoked curiosity in the town. One of the native servants who had been given three days off by Jacques Tessier went to the Police Commissariat at Cherchell and unburdened himself to the Commissioner's secretary. By one of the hundred unbelievable hazards of this night of fantastic adventure the secretary happened to belong to a resistance group. He had been informed in a vague way of the coming meeting but did not know the exact date and place. On the off chance he telephoned Maître Queyrat who had spoken to him of the meeting, and got the reply that the lawyer was away for two days shooting. He understood what this meant and dismissed the native with a few reassuring words. But the suspicious Arab was not to be put off. He waited until the Secretary had left and then went to the Commissioner in person. This dignitary completely lost his head. He leapt on to his motor-cycle when, by a new stroke of luck, he met Lieutenant Lenen.

'Where are you bound for, Monsieur le Commissaire, you look quite upset?'

'No wonder. I'm going to make a search of Tessier's place. Here's some dirty work afoot. Gaullists perhaps.'

'But that's my job, Monsieur le Commissaire. I'll go myself.'

And he grabbed the police officer's motor-cycle to go and warn the 'conspirators'. These had no inkling of the danger threatening them: the search, the general alarm, a diplomatic incident and the probable failure of the projected landing. . . .

The conference was stopped immediately, the French officers disappeared in all directions. More than a month later I learnt the details from General Clark himself who recounted them with a great sense of humour.

'I had never dreamed that such a dignified French General could change his clothes so swiftly. From the window I saw him making off through the garden, putting on his coat as he ran. Brigadier Lemnitzer, the three other American officers, the two British officers and myself were busy gathering up the papers and plans scattered over the table. We were thrust in a heap into a musty-smelling cellar, an ideal trap. We felt like rats.'<sup>1</sup>

'We could hear all that went on above. I had my revolver in one pocket and fifteen thousand francs in notes in the other, without knowing' which arm I should use if challenged. After an hour calm was restored, and we could emerge from our funk hole.'

Lieutenant Lenen had gone, but he had left his assistant Sub-Lieutenant Michel to prepare a film-setting in case of a search. Cards and upturned glasses were spread about the tables; empty bottles of which fortunately there was no lack were strewn about the floor. The atmosphere of a night of orgy was created to perfection.

The two French officers agreed with Mr. Robert Murphy that the 'guests' should leave as quickly as possible. The submarine was due that evening and there was danger in delay. But the sea had become so heavy that the use of rubber boats was out of the question.

Mr. Robert Murphy offered two hundred thousand francs to Lenen and his assistant to try to find a solid rowing boat. They refused the offer: it would have been madness to arouse suspicions further at such an hour of the day by a proposition of so outlandish a nature. On the other hand, it was sheer madness to stay in this place another twenty-four hours.

Finally, the eight men made the hazardous attempt despite the storm.

<sup>1</sup> One of the party told me the following story: An American officer's teeth were chattering loudly. Clark stuck a lump of chewing gum into his mouth.

'But it has no taste,' the officer murmured.

'I know,' answered the General, 'I've been chewing it since this morning.'

Several times they were thrown back by the waves and almost drowned. Time was being lost. The first attempt was made at eleven o'clock. It was then three in the morning. One last try was decided on. The travellers embarked in the skiffs. Those remaining behind waded in to push them over the bar where the surf threw them back at each attempt.

'All eight of us took the oars,' General Clark said later, 'after having taken off our uniforms and placed them in the bottom of the boats, together with the hundred thousand francs, brought in case it proved necessary to bribe someone, and of course all the papers. Suddenly, an extra big wave capsized the boats, and clothes, money, colonels, generals, plans and papers found themselves floundering about in the cold water. We lost everything except the most important papers. Fortunately the submarine was there to pick us up. . . .'

It was then four o'clock.

But the cream of the jest is not in General Clark's narrative, for it took place the next morning in the Police Station at Cherchell. Lieutenant Lenen was describing to the worthy Commissioner how he had found the United States minister, his aides and d'Astier de la Vigerie all in very fine form in the company of some 'ladies of easy virtue'.

'It seems to me that it would have been out of place for me to bother them, sir, don't you think so?'

The Commissioner had no desire to bother anyone, but one point excited his curiosity. He wanted to get it clear.

'Hm. . . there's just one thing I'd like to know, my friend. What were the girls like? Pretty?'

Thanks to Lenen's fertile imagination, Mr. Murphy's reputation in Cherchell was completely undermined.

CHAPTER V <sup>1</sup>  
THE LANDING

*La révolution, c'est les vacances de la vie*

ANDRÉ MALRAUX

WE woke up, that night, still heavy with sleep, a bitter taste in our mouths, our hearts beating fast. From the heights of the Kouba, we could hear a storm rumbling over the sea. This sullen, disgruntled awakening was like that of the first alerts over Paris during the 'phoney war'.

But, at 6.30, even with one's head buried under the pillow, it became impossible to believe any longer in thunder. In the chill morning light, the entire village was on the doorsteps, on the pavements, in the streets. The women had hastily slipped a coat over their nightdresses and were listening, shivering, to the talk of the menfolk gathered in small groups. Anxiety weighed over this grey dawn.

At seven o'clock, a telegraph boy rang at my door. He brought me a cable from Lisbon telling me that my Portuguese transit visa for England had been refused. Seeing that I was dismayed, he asked me the reason and calmly, yet firmly, asserted:

'Why worry! The Americans landed during the night!'

And he dismissed the situation with a sweeping gesture.

This was not a complete surprise to me. For several days past, we had felt that some great event was impending. Two days earlier, in the United States consulate, John Boyd had told me for the tenth time, with a knowing wink, in his drawling Louisiana accent:

'You'll soon be able to rejoin your husband without any visas.'

He went no further with his confidences, but returned to the decoding of stacks of telegrams piled up on his desk. During the previous week

<sup>1</sup> In this chapter and also in the following ones, I have textually reproduced some pages from the diary which I kept, day by day, until February 1943. They have the merit of reproducing the true atmosphere which I might perhaps fail to do several months after the events. But I only learnt later, thanks to the stories told to me by people concerned, many of the details which I have interpolated.

## THE LANDING

in all the rooms of the consulate, the rest of the staff, following his example, had been working at maximum pressure, sweating, in their shirt sleeves, talking too quickly and too loudly for one not to know that something was brewing.

Through the quiet streets of Algiers, large Studebakers from the consulate — everybody recognized the red number plates 'T.T.Z.' — passed at high speed, coming and going feverishly. . . .

So my telegraph boy departed, to spread abroad his news which soon opened wide the door to rumours. Through half-open windows, the wireless poured forth blustering military marches which echoed through the village.

On this November 8th, so long awaited, hoped for in silence and now breaking like the dawn of Liberation, the same microphone from which the night before the eternal Vichy insipidities had been oozing out, was uttering surprising tunes, words which for two years had been banned:

La République nous appelle  
Sachons vaincre ou sachons périr. . . .

The Marseillaise, so dishonoured, had recovered its full meaning. It burst forth gloriously with the new vigour of freedom.

Every quarter of an hour, Radio-Algiers was issuing a 'proclamation from General Giraud':

For two years, you have scrupulously observed the Armistice terms, in spite of repeated infringements by our opponents. To-day Germany and Italy intend to occupy North Africa. The United States are forestalling them and have assured us of their loyal and disinterested support. We cannot neglect this un hoped for opportunity to rise once more. I am back with you, back in the battle line. Have faith in me, as I have in you. We have but one passion, France; one aim, Victory. Remember that the fate of France is in the hands of the Army of Africa.

Followed by military marches, against a background of the Marseillaise, this announcement, read in a resolute voice made a great impression.

Already the roads were guarded by troops, but the detachments, left to the guidance of their leaders, had received no orders. They confined themselves to taking up their positions. Yet news was filtering through



surprisingly fast; no one knew how or where or by what miraculous transmission they had learnt it, but as early as seven o'clock the natives were giving details of the landing places.

When, at nine o'clock, I left my house, I knew that 'they' were on both sides of Algiers, at Sidi Ferruch and at Ain Taya.

The streets were virtually deserted.

Doctor J., mobilized for civil defence and whom I met outside his house, gave me my first shock. Doctor J. was far from being pleased:

'I certainly do not like the Germans. No, I don't like the Germans. But I don't like the Americans either. Nor the British. I have fought for nine months and I do not want to have to return to harness.'

Then questioning me more directly:

'You are going down to Algiers? You must be mad. You will get killed. Don't interfere. It is none of our business. . . .'

Disappointment number one. So not everybody was glad:

The chemist sat brooding in the tobacconist's shop, on the look-out for news — true or false, it did not matter, he absorbed it all the same. I repeated General Giraud's proclamation to him. He listened carefully, pondering, as though digesting it. Then, reassured, he shook his head and concluded:

'So it is all right? We shan't be fighting?'

But nothing could disturb my optimism that morning. Neither suppression of the trams, nor the prudent advice, 'Now, be sensible, just go back home' — which the customers in the tobacconist's showered upon me. They were anxious, vaguely humiliated and clearly disapproving. . . .

I careered down the short cut to Algiers, my heart full of joy, humming all the time the *Chant du Départ*, like a theme ever to be repeated. Four and a half miles to be covered on foot in order to see, to know. . . .

There was, I remember, a pale, hazy autumn sun that day. The district of the Ruisseau was seething. I walked on and on; no one tried to stop me. A helmeted traffic policeman merely advised me to keep close to the walls. He was quite right: the guns were thundering away and the shrapnel riddled the Ruc de Lyon along which I was going. Nevertheless, in spite of my unconcern, I must have looked slightly tense.

A tram conductor, coming back from the depot, said to me: 'Now then, little lady, smile away, this is a great day.'

When I reached the Jardin d'Essais, two batteries were firing full out.

## THE LANDING

They were firing at a destroyer moored in the roads, just opposite them.<sup>1</sup> The detonations, as they went off, made the earth tremble; dry, rapid bursts of machine-gun fire came intermittently. From the sea resounded the answer, a subdued answer. And sixty yards behind those who were firing on the 'invaders', passers-by already wore small American flags in their buttonholes. One wondered where they sprang from! A *Légionnaire*, on the other hand, courageous but not foolhardy, had unsewn the felt emblem from his beret and on the faded material, a darker triangle was discernible. . . .

At Belcourt, Arabs gathered, lingered, started endless discourses, not knowing how to evade this event. That evening and on the morrow, they would begin to leave the town, as a contagious panic gripped them.

Already early in the morning, on this November 8th, painted wooden trunks, mattresses, large couscous plates, multi-coloured blankets were being piled up pell-mell on handcarts and in charabancs. At the last moment, on the top of the heap, would come the wives, the mothers, the 'Mutchachos'.

The usually peaceful face of Algiers donned a mask of riot. In the centre of the town, the iron shutters of the shop windows were still down. Cafés were closed, terraces emptied of their tables and chairs. On the pavements, crowds roamed aimlessly, as they did every Sunday, slightly upset by the change in their Sunday habits, missing their *apéritif* on one of the few days in the week when 'drinks were allowed'. The confectioners' shops were filled with customers.<sup>2</sup>

Algerians strolled along to the noise of machine-gun fire. Algiers was to stroll calmly all day, this calmness being due not to any particular courage but to a lack of realization and a simple, definite reluctance to take any active part.

In the heart of the town, however, a drama was being played. But the daily life of the Algerians remained unaltered, not even remotely troubled by the widespread fighting, the rifle-fire, the guns, the guerrilla warfare. All of which was just superimposed on it. In front of the buildings occupied by rebels — and from which they had to be driven out with hand grenades — mothers peacefully walked past with their children.

<sup>1</sup> It was later said that the guns fired blank cartridges.

<sup>2</sup> Sunday was the only day when the sale of cakes was allowed. Their baking done, the pastrycooks preferred to take the risk and open their shops rather than lose their wares. . . . Good example of commercial courage!

In the Rue Denfert-Rochereau, a billposter was plastering a notice placard on the walls, serenely announcing 'the event of the season'. It was 'Agnes Capri, the singer'!

Yet, beneath its nonchalant air, Algiers was seething with excitement. When I reached the United States consulate, Rue Michelet, I found a French armed guard, bayonet fixed, behind the locked glass doors. A naval officer, in full dress, acted as the Embassy head porter and ruthlessly sorted out all arrivals. Ostensibly because the American diplomats occupied the third floor, no other inhabitant of the building could pass through, either to enter or go out. Fortunately, in the general upset, the entrance in the side street had been forgotten.

Nobody knew exactly whether it was a case of protecting the consuls or of keeping guard over them. Protect them: against whom? No one, even amongst those who were to resist, who were to fight the landing troops, would seek to pick a quarrel with them. Guard them? It was a little late. For the last three weeks, since the interview at Cherchell, they had abandoned all reserve and almost all discretion. Under the very eyes of the Armistice Commissions, the consulate cars had been used for all liaison work, for the most risky purposes, for compromising transport.

The crowd that was afoot that Sunday, passing in front of the consulate, merely wondered:

'What have they been up to during the night, the Americans?'

Only a few could answer that question.

The whole of the Saturday Mr. Robert D. Murphy had spent at the consulate, 119 Rue Michelet. The ashtrays on his desk were full, he did not even have time to go home to lunch at the Villa des Roses, as he was wont to do. His secretary, Mrs. Harding, was worn out. His staff was spread over the whole of Algiers . . . and the neighbouring beaches.

Besides, he no longer needed his staff. An amazing thing happened: towards the end of the Saturday afternoon, to gain time, secret telegrams were no longer sent in cipher.

And throughout the evening, the wireless droned:<sup>1</sup>

'Hallo, Robert . . . Franklin is coming . . . Hallo, Robert. . .'

Mr. Robert Murphy allowed himself to smile. He was in the know. Towards nine o'clock he got up, took his hat, his gloves, his umbrella. Before leaving his office, he threw a last, mechanical glance on General

<sup>1</sup> B.B.C. transmissions of November 7th.

## THE LANDING

Weygand's portrait which hung in a conspicuous place, with a flattering dedication.

And, in the cool of the evening, he walked down the Rue Michelet, crowded with idlers. He went as far as Number 26, stopped and rang. On the door was a brass plate: Dr. Henri Aboulker, oto-rhinology.

Henri d'Astier was waiting for the Minister. He introduced the Doctor to him, for the man whose consulting-room was to be the real headquarters of the insurrection during the night of the landing had not previously known the United States representative. He had never met him.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. F. Cole, Consul-General of Algiers for the United States, was already there, with the vice-consuls Boyd, Pendar, Woodruff, and a member of the consulate and his wife. Later, in the night, the Americans divided into two groups: Mr. Cole, several members of the consulate and Joan Tuyl, John Knox's fiancée, went two doors further down the street, to the house of Mr. Alexandre, the barrister.<sup>2</sup> They could not afford to keep all their eggs in one basket.

Mr. Robert Murphy remained at 26 Rue Michelet. No. 26, the nerve centre of the insurrection.

The evening was spent in putting finishing touches to the orders which were to operate during the night. They appeared all the more official because they were stamped with the seal of the Garrison Headquarters and Colonel Jousse had signed a fair number.<sup>3</sup> With equal zeal, the conspirators had impressed on the black armbands the white letters 'V.P.' — *Volontaires de la Place*<sup>4</sup> — which would make it easier to come and go between vital sectors. That very morning, workmen had arrived and, openly, in full view of the adjoining houses, had fitted up an aerial twelve feet high in the court-yard of the building. A modern transmitting and

<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Mr. Roosevelt's representative had had several meetings with Dr. Aboulker's son and his nephew who were in the thick of the conspiracy. Amazing scenes took place on that night: a father found his son again, three brothers discovered that they belonged to the same organization. Until morning over all things hung an atmosphere of farce.

<sup>2</sup> General Rene Bouscat shared, that night, at the Alexandre's house, the sofa of Consul Cole.

<sup>3</sup> General Mast had personally given a blank signed order to Henri d'Astier. José Aboulker typed an 'order to civil and military authorities to assist in the fulfilment of a confidential mission'. The important looking seal 'Secret' crowned it.

<sup>4</sup> At various times, the conspirators had ordered some half-dozen pads from various dealers. They cut them about, stuck together the words required and so made up official lettering.

receiving set was now occupying most of the Aboulkers' bathroom.

Everything was ready. The roles were carefully distributed, they had been since Cherchell. But it was only on the Friday night that Robert Murphy had summoned José Aboulker and said: 'It is for Saturday.' During the remaining twenty-four hours, of the thousand young men who were relied upon as 'shock troops', only a bare four hundred could be contacted. Some, and amongst them the most devoted ones, had simply gone away for the week-end to neighbouring seaside resorts, tempted by the sun.

So, at the time of the action, there was only a handful of musical comedy conspirators. Musical comedy conspirators because they themselves had never taken the whole matter really seriously: it was not the least endearing side of their enterprise that they had never indulged in pompous assertions. Yet this handful was to be the backbone of an organized putsch in a large town, a capital. And what is more they were to succeed, succeed without shedding blood, without causing riots, without shots being fired.

The task they had undertaken was to anaesthetize Algiers for one night. The Americans had asked them to neutralize all public services for the two hours preceding and following the landing of the first detachments.

This skeleton force — they were exactly 377 — did much more than this, much more than had been expected of them. Solely by virtue of their official warrants, their impudence and, as a last resort, by pointing obsolete firearms at recalcitrants, they held the entire town under their control for eight full hours.

Those who were present at the final discussions between these young people before the moment of action know the fervent atmosphere in which last details were settled. Most of them were to live the greatest adventure of their lives on the morrow. The fact that they were so few and so badly equipped at the time of the action rendered the undertaking perilous, almost foolish, at the least foolhardy. Everyone of them was prepared to give up his life, gladly. At twenty — and many of them were no older — it is exhilarating to take such a risk with a pirouette.

All the evening messengers thronged gaily through Dr. Aboulker's consulting-room, dispatch-riders entered, cracking jokes, went out again, brought news, departed with new instructions. Probably the only one who would have liked to be twenty-four hours older was Mr. Murphy.

Because the others took things lightly, he felt all the more the responsibility which lay on his shoulders and realized the seriousness of events.

At length, neighbours began to wonder at the constant coming and going, at the uproar. Too many large cars started up noisily in front of the door. At ten o'clock, the police was given an anonymous warning that 'a Gaullist meeting was being held at Dr. Aboulker's'.

Half an hour later, the door bell rang ominously. It was the chief of the political police of Algiers, in person, come over to arrest the offenders. He was invited to come in and the trap closed on him. He had not taken the matter seriously, and was not accompanied by any of his police force. While he was being overpowered, Robert Murphy kept in the background. The chief of police was not even aware of his presence — he got on his high horse:

'You will hear more of this!'

As he was very much in the way, the 'offenders' packed him off to quieten him . . . to the police headquarters.

For events had been moving rapidly during the past few hours. Whilst Robert Murphy and Henri d'Astier, entrenched at Dr. Aboulker's, directed operations, many things had taken place in sleeping Algiers.

Let us examine events as systematically as possible. They all occurred between 10.30 p.m. and 2 a.m.

The police headquarters to which d'Astier sent Delgove to get rid of him<sup>1</sup> had promptly fallen into the hands of the rebels. Achiary, recalled the day before by Guy Cohen from Setif — where he was clearing himself of his disgrace — had rallied without hesitation the Algerian police in which he was still popular. The Head of the C.I.D., Bringard, the Director of Public Safety, Muscatelli, the Commissaire Central, Esqueyré, promptly changed camp.

During that night, it was José Aboulker, only twenty-two years old, who ruled the police headquarters. He applied the prearranged plan. Following his instructions, his men arrested everybody of note, everybody

<sup>1</sup> When Delgove, still unaware of the putsch and the landing, arrived at the police station with his guards, he was more than surprised to be greeted by Achiary, Bringard, Esqueyré . . . all his colleagues. Achiary received him in these terms: 'No more of your b— staff here. Now it is we who are the stronger.'

Following on these reassuring words, Delgove was sent to meditate in a cell which he had prepared for the conspirators. Two hours later, he was called from his enforced dwelling. Bringard questioned him. Delgove, terrified, burst into sobs: 'Don't kill me. Don't kill me.' It was a pretty sight.

who had a name well-known in Algiers. Others, in groups of three, took charge of all the police stations in the town, protected by official warrants.<sup>1</sup>

Of course telephone calls began to pour in. Before settling himself in the police headquarters, José Aboulker and a few friends had spent the evening in the underground tunnels<sup>2</sup> of Algiers, cutting telephone wires which supplied most of the town's communications. The Admiralty cable, as thick as a fist, joining Algeria to the Metropolis, was cut in several places for greater safety. The last message which reached the O.F.I. Agency of Vichy (ex-Havas) sent by Pierre Bret, head of the Algiers' branch, was worded thus: 'Do not forget to send the sports bulletin to-morrow.' Alas, the sport fans in Algeria were never to know the results of the French football matches which took place on November 8th.

But official local lines had been carefully maintained. One of the first concerns of the conspirators had been to take, on the stroke of midnight, the main telephone exchange 'Mogador' by force. This controlled all military and official calls. It was the abbé Cordier — of whom we shall hear a great deal later on — who carried out this feat, helped only by four men, having, as sole precaution, given the watch-dog some poisoned food during the evening.

So all the high officials, both military and diplomatic, were plugged in to the police headquarters and Guy Cohen, the couturier, left his type-

<sup>1</sup> José Aboulker, who was to direct the active part of operations, that is the putsch, had been found by d'Astier to be too young in appearance to have enough authority, not over his comrades, but over his future prisoners. So it was unanimously decided that he would be officially placed under the orders of a high-ranked military man, whilst keeping the effective leadership of the business. An Air Force Group Captain had been named; his five stripes would serve as a cover. It would not be fair to give his name because the Group Captain 'forgot' to come, at the last minute, he thought better of it and remained at home. His defection was serious because he carried on him all the orders for the local police stations. At half-past midnight, as he had not yet arrived, Aboulker and Cohen hastily made out new orders. Provisionally, an Air Force Squadron Leader, Commandant Béraud, suddenly arrived and lent the prestige of his four stripes — accompanying several trios to police stations.

<sup>2</sup> The whole town of Algiers is a vast rabbit warren, where tunnels date back to the time of the Corsairs. Mr. Murphy and a few of the conspirators were friendly with Mme Hesnaul, an Englishwoman, a d'Arcy by birth, whose villa was situated next to the Hôtel Saint-Georges. It was in her garden that they discovered the first entrance to the tunnels which was to enable them to explore all the underground network of the town. When they passed under the Admiralty, where the tunnel was almost on the surface, they could hear the voices of the orderlies and used to remove their shoes not to attract attention. Pierre Alexandre and Trabut, son of the Algerian optician, drew up plans of this underground. That is how the Barbaresques contributed to the American landing.

writer<sup>1</sup> to answer boldly crazy demands in the atmosphere of a school rag.

'... but certainly, sir. Those are the orders ... If you do not obey immediately, you will be recalled.'

Terrified by the threat, the man at the other end of the line would comply with the demand. From all corners of the room subdued laughter could be heard. And then one of the conspirators would let out this glorious comment:

'Shut your b — mouths, you b — swine, or everything will be lost.'

History is not always what historians, serious-minded people, imagine it to be.

Later, Ettori, secretary of the Governor-General of Algeria, wanted to telephone from his house but failed to get through. Somewhat anxious, he went to the police station on the Boulevard Gallieni, where he was put into touch with headquarters.

'What is happening?'

'We do not yet know exactly, sir, but your presence here seems to us essential.'

'Coming.'

And he actually came, which saved the bother of fetching him from his home in order to put him into prison.

General de Roubertie<sup>2</sup> entered so well into the spirit of the game that he wanted to take part in this 'exercise for civil defence'. He congratulated the gathering on the zeal shown in fulfilling their task. The gathering accepted the congratulations, after which the General was put under lock and key.

Whilst this comedy was being enacted at the police headquarters, whilst Robert Murphy was still anxiously waiting in the Rue Michelet, what was taking place in the town between the hours of twelve and two in the morning? As I have already said, the telephone exchange Mogador was taken, the police stations (or rather the sentry on guard at each one) surrendered without attempting to resist. No greater difficulty was en-

<sup>1</sup> Right in the middle of the revolt, during the hours of uncertainty, the 'rebels' allowed themselves the extravagant pleasure of having strictly formal examinations of the personalities arrested. With great dignity an amateur clerk took note and these notes were typed out. I do not know what has become of the file. Probably it is in Mr. Robert Murphy's hands. Some of the evidence given during these hectic hours would not be without spice.

<sup>2</sup> Commanding the 19th Corps.



countered at the Palais Bruce, administrative centre. Nor was there any sign of rebellion at the Hôtel Saint-Georges, seat of the Admiralty Command; nor at the Air Force headquarters.

At the General Post Office, Boulevard Laferrière, the night watchmen hadn't had time to say 'Jack Robinson'.

The three radio-cars from the broadcasting station of the Bois de Boulogne were also taken without trouble.

Perillier, the secretary on duty at the Gouvernement général, was arrested. Ettori, as we have seen, walked into prison in person to fall into the hands of the rebels.

At the Summer Palace, Madame Chatel — her husband, the Governor, being in Vichy — was confronted by a handful of young men who, pointing a revolver at her, politely asked her to remain in her drawing-room until further notice. She tried to escape and would probably have succeeded in the general bustle which reigned, had not one of the young men on guard at a small door in the garden, and who was taking the game very seriously, stopped her, and asked her for the password! The password? What password?<sup>1</sup> She was brought back into her drawing-room, and was not again let out of sight.

The Prefect of Algiers, Monsieur Temple, was taken unaware in his flat in the Rue de Constantine, still in his fanciful nightshirt. He took half an hour to understand what was happening, the last half-hour of his career as a Vichy Civil Servant. At the end of thirty minutes of painful thinking he heard the noise of the guns that made his windows shake. His guards condescended to give an explanation. In a flash he understood and took off the mask he wore of the Marshal's confidential agent as easily as one takes off one's overcoat when it becomes too hot. And it was indeed becoming too hot! He asked leave to telephone, and was allowed to do so. He got through to the police station and expressed painful astonishment at being treated in such a manner:

'But look here, I am on your side. Why, I have been with you at heart for ever so long.'

Ten minutes later, he had taken a hair of the dog that bit him. He telephoned again and carefully explored the ground on which he trod:

<sup>1</sup> The password for the whole of the landing force was 'whisky-soda'. 'Whisky' was the word to be said by the American soldiers as they put foot on the Algerian beaches. 'Soda' was the reply to be made by the young patriots who were to guide them. In actual fact, things happened differently.

## THE LANDING

'Have you thought about food supplies? And first aid? Leave it alone, I will take care of all that. . . .'

And the round-up continued, methodically, without a hitch. Yet they were no more than a handful for all these small but daring jobs. Three, five, never more than a dozen for the biggest operations.

They arrested Admiral Battet, Admiral Leclerc, Admiral Fenard. They arrested the heads of the Legion, Bruleux and Marquand and their assistant, Cavalli. They arrested Colonel Gasset, head of the Military Cabinet of the Gouvernement général; Messieurs Maroger and Guchet, heads of the Civil Cabinet. They also seized General Koeltz and General de Boisboissel, his A.D.C. Admiral Moreau, who tried to escape towards Blida to organize resistance there, was also caught. They found some luggage in his car which was afterwards identified as belonging to Admiral Darlan.

General Koeltz, in his pyjamas, raged in vain. When, on the following morning, he was set free, bursting with indignation, he could only find one thing to say:

'These insolent young whipper-snappers dared to smoke in front of me all night long. They smoked me like a ham.'

Whilst these events were following their course, another small group, led by a young second lieutenant named Bernard Pauphilet — son of a professor — was reaching the Villa des Oliviers, General Juin's residence. There they arrested the Commander-in-Chief. But they had to deal there with bigger game.

General Alphonse Juin, officially warned by Mr. Robert Murphy at one o'clock of the imminence of the coming operations, had immediately asked that the matter be submitted to Admiral Darlan, this with the consent of the United States Minister. Darlan was staying at Admiral Fenard's villa, the Villa Arthur, in Guyotville, and General Juin sent for him there.

Mr. Robert Murphy took advantage of the car which was to take Lemaigre-Dubreuil and Alexandre to Blida to greet General Giraud and was dropped at the Villa des Oliviers with Henri d'Astier de la Vigerie.

Darlan, beyond himself with fury, greeted him with these words:

'I will end up by believing that the Americans are as stupid as their Allies. If the landing fails, it is Germany who will invade North Africa. And France's position will then be desperate.'

With these courteous words began the first interview between Darlan and Murphy in Algiers. It continued in conditions almost farcical. Neither man felt certain of what the morrow would bring forth nor whether in a few hours their rôles would not be reversed, Murphy appearing before Darlan. The United States Minister who had planned all the preparations for the landing was only too well aware of the weakness of the forces available. Admiral Darlan was too cunning a man not to have an inkling of the part he might be led to play and which he probably had hoped for long ago.

Mr. Robert Murphy proposed immediate negotiations. The Admiral refused. There was no longer any point. But he noted the proposal with satisfaction: he was no longer the evicted pleader of a month before.<sup>1</sup> He evaded the issue by hedging.

'I can do nothing without the consent of the Marshal.'

After long discussions, urged on by the diplomat, Darlan suggested that a telegram be sent to the Marshal through the Admiralty's wireless station.

Darlan wrote down a message, sealed the envelope and handed it to Murphy. Suddenly seized with a doubt, the American envoy asked for Darlan's word of honour that the message contained no military instructions. The Admiral solemnly gave his word.

Mr. Robert Murphy entrusted the letter to one of his vice-consuls, Kenneth Pendar, I believe. Together the trio, Murphy, Darlan, Juin, awaited his return. It was only then that the Admiral noticed the armed young men who were watching him. Was he a prisoner?

'Not exactly,' answered Mr. Robert Murphy. 'But . . .'

Minutes went by. At the end of twenty minutes, the diplomat began to be anxious because his messenger had not returned. He went down to the garden to see what was happening . . . and was in his turn seized by young patriots, too conscientious, who did not know him and were obeying orders to let no one leave General Juin's house. For the last twenty minutes the unfortunate Pendar had been cooling his heels in company of these same watch-dogs.

Finally the misunderstanding was cleared up. The vice-consul left with his message but instead of going straight to the Admiralty, he called at the headquarters of the insurrection, Rue Michelet, where Mr. Robert Murphy's accomplices, less scrupulous than he, opened the Admiral's

<sup>1</sup> I will tell later how the Admiral sounded Mr. Robert Murphy before the landing.

## THE LANDING

letter to censor it. It contained *an order to the Admiralty to immediately open fire on the 'Anglo-Saxon invaders'*.

Perplexed, furious, Kenneth Pendar immediately returned to the Villa des Oliviers where Darlan, his disloyalty revealed, drafted a genuine message to the Marshal.

Mr. Robert Murphy obtained no more in spite of having discovered the Admiral's game and of having strained to the limit the undertaking given to General Giraud.

In any case, the two men parted as enemies. The Admiral was left in his villa and placed in the hands of Pauphilet's men instead of being removed to the outskirts. This was a capital mistake.

Then something occurred, remarkable for its psychological significance. These young men hated the Admiral whole-heartedly, they took him to be a traitor, in the pay of Germany; a menace to France. They believed this in all sincerity and felt that he should disappear in order that France might rise and live again. He was at their mercy. They were armed. Times were troubled: next day they might all be shot and, at that very minute, their lives were not worth much. Would they not carry out what they deemed to be a necessary act of justice?

No, they did not dare to kill him.<sup>1</sup> What made the fact even stranger was this detail, amazing yet absolutely authentic: in the small, timorous Pauphilet group was a boy of twenty, Bonnier de la Chapelle, the future murderer of Admiral Darlan.

There was only one mishap that night — at the Admiralty. The youths who attempted to invade the building were greeted by rifle shots from the guard-room where the keeper had not been caught by surprise. One of them was wounded, the remainder taken prisoner. They were thrown into a cell.<sup>2</sup>

The skirmish had given the alarm. The officers on duty saw a British destroyer in port and ordered fire. It was 3.30 a.m.

<sup>1</sup> Later, I asked them why they had not dared kill him. I was told by one of them: 'If you did but know what it is like, to have a loaded revolver in one's hand, a finger on the trigger, and before you a rotter, a traitor . . . but a Frenchman nevertheless, a man such as yourself . . . unarmed! We just couldn't!' He added: 'We thought he would be judged next morning by a court martial and immediately shot.' And he ended with: 'If we had but known . . .' in a tone so bitter that it spoke volumes.

<sup>2</sup> They were to remain there for four days after the Allied landing. Without any news of the outside world, badly treated. When food was brought to them, their guards took a sadistic pleasure in telling them that the landing had been a failure and that they would be shot next day.

But at the same time, Mr. Robert Murphy, back in the Rue Michelet, was opening the first bottle of whisky when he heard that the first batch of American troops had stepped ashore on the beach of Sidi Ferruch. There were to be other contingents. Other bottles too. Toasts drunk to Victory.

The big moment had indeed arrived.<sup>1</sup>

The small groups of partisans who had been placed during the evening on the neighbouring beaches by the vice-consuls had at long last obtained an answer to the signal of their torches: five flashes, interval, five flashes, interval. . . .

After hours of anxious waiting, they saw the silhouette of great armoured barges appear in the night. Men leapt from them. They were American Rangers.

Everywhere, in each group, there was a moment of doubt, of uneasiness. Those who were waiting for their liberators had believed that the American soldiers still wore the flat British helmet, the 'shaving-dish'. When they saw men with high helmets approaching, they instinctively thought:

'We have been betrayed! These are Germans!'

This made them even forget the pass-word. They came forward and naively asked:

'Are you the American soldiers?'

The others answered 'Yeah!' with such a Texas accent that it did nothing to lessen the confusion. At last understanding was reached.<sup>2</sup>

It was not so simple in all sectors. On the other side of Algiers, towards Cap Matifou, there was spontaneous resistance. The landing took place under the defenders' fire.<sup>3</sup>

In the port of Algiers, the British destroyer which so unfortunately

<sup>1</sup> Only Jean Rigault was missing at the roll-call. He completely disappeared during the night of the 7th to the 8th.

<sup>2</sup> Other incidents were less harmless. Several of the American storm-troops which followed the first waves did not even know the pass-word. Marines opened fire on French guides who were waiting to show them the way. It had been proclaimed by wireless that those Frenchmen who did not wish to fight against the Anglo-Saxons had to hoist a double tricolor flag on their cars, their tanks, their ships. Those who did so were greeted with gun-fire. These incidents occurred chiefly in the district around Oran.

<sup>3</sup> Bill Stoneman, of the *Chicago Tribune*, who had been in one of the landing barges, told me in his droll way: 'Although I shouted "Don't fire, we bring you sugar", they continued shooting. The English who were around me did not seem to notice. They certainly have no imagination!'

## THE LANDING

gave the alarm and on which the Admiralty batteries opened fire landed a contingent of a hundred men. They were repelled by the French Marines. They re-embarked as best they could for their landing craft had been damaged against the rocks — and took back one solitary prisoner, a French military policeman, who four days later found himself in Gibraltar, still in a daze as to what had occurred, all the more so because he was one of those who had participated in the putsch!

During the night, whilst Mr. Murphy remained with Admiral Darlan, M. Lemaigre-Dubreuil and M. Alexandre continued their round to make sure that all dispositions were working according to plan. Reassured on this point, they set forth for Blida where they were to welcome General Giraud who was due to arrive by 'plane at dawn from Gibraltar.

When they reached Blida, they found complete chaos. General de Montsabert who commanded the region was in the plot, it is true, but the colonel in charge of the aerodrome refused to obey and threatened to fire on anyone who set foot on his airfield. There was a risk that when General Giraud arrived, he would be taken prisoner by the peppery colonel . . . or worse. Another scene fit for a musical-comedy was enacted: the General, in a rage, tried to have the aviators put into cells by sending Algerian infantry to the camp, but these were not numerous enough. He then had the two batteries at his disposal pointed at the cross-roads and sent post-haste for reinforcements to Kolca.

Hours passed in purposeless waiting. Giraud did not arrive. Lemaigre-Dubreuil and Alexandre grew anxious and decided to return to Algiers. On the way they were arrested by an English patrol which, after the landing, had pushed inland. Of course they did not know the pass-word, and, without further ado, the patrol forced the two men and Jacques Beylair, chef of the Chantiers, who had joined them, to get out of the car. They were made to line up against the hedge, and narrowly escaped being shot as spies.

At long last they managed to explain the situation to an officer and continued on their way. At the cross-roads to Bouzareua they fell upon Colonel Jousse, in a very pessimistic mood:

'Resistance is starting in the town. We shall not be able to hold out long and the Americans haven't yet decided to make an appearance. Everything is lost. . . '

Lemaigre-Dubreuil decided to remain behind with Jousse, while

Alexandre went to Algiers to see how the land lay. He had no sooner started off in the car than, without warning, a company of Indo-Chinese troops, panic-stricken, opened fire at random and sprayed the road with bullets. With extreme difficulty Colonel Jousse got them to cease fire. Alexandre put two men, seriously wounded, in the back of his car and in that way got through the barrage set up at the outskirts of Algiers:

'I am a doctor. I am taking these two wounded men to hospital.'

At that moment, in the small hours of the morning, the situation had become clear. The Americans had gained, fairly easily, a foothold on either side of Algiers. At Sidi Ferruch they had made contact with General Mast whose headquarters for the past two or three days had been in the farm of Zeralda, fifteen miles from the capital.

But the forces which landed were very small,<sup>1</sup> a few thousand men, with no heavy armour, no other aid than the guns on board ship out at sea. This explained their hesitations, for the town was open to them, was not attempting to defend itself. Everybody official, whether civil or military, in Algiers was under lock and key. A putsch? No, rather a great, a colossal mystification. All the nerve centres of the town were in the hands of the rebels.

Radio-Algiers began giving out the programme which I heard on getting up that morning at Kouba. The studios in the Rue Berthezene had been taken over during the night by some ten or twelve determined men who had settled in there. Once installed, they waited. What they were waiting for was General Giraud, their leader. But the General was still in Gibraltar and the landing took place without him. In case this unlikely event should occur, the conspirators, with the help of M. Tarbe de Saint-Hardouin, had prepared together, the day before, a short apocryphal speech, capable of rousing the imagination of the people. There is no malice in pointing out that in this stirring address of November 8th, which will go down in history to the credit of General Giraud, one encounters a phrase pronounced a short while before by General de

<sup>1</sup> It is known to-day how much the North African campaign was the result of successful bluff. I remember the estimates given out to the public, figures which were not denied: the rumour ran that there were 800,000 Americans in North Africa. In fact the complete operation was carried out by 35,000 men — from Agadir to Bone. As General Clark said at Cherchell, 'These means were past all understanding. . .'

Gaulle.<sup>1</sup> Anyway at six in the morning, Doctor Raphael Aboulker, in a deep voice, 'doubled' for General Giraud.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, at seven a.m., the rising had been completely successful. The town was in the hands of the conspirators. They could see the ships of the Royal Navy in the port, they knew that American troops had set foot on African soil. They were awaiting the arrival of the first Allied contingents which were due to relieve them.

They waited for them with desperate anxiety and the situation grew steadily worse . . . It became imperative that the Americans should be warned of these facts which they ignored. Alexandre, having consulted briefly with d'Astier and Aboulker, then attempted to leave the town once more, this time for Sidi Ferruch in order to get in touch with the Allied headquarters. He tried in vain to leave via Hydra or via Bouzarea. Men were posted to prevent the circulation of cars. At last he tried via Guyotville. At Saint-Eugène, a few sailors stopped him. He jammed his foot on the accelerator and passed through, greeted by a burst of bullets.

The danger then became of a different kind: now he ran the risk of being stopped again as a spy by Anglo-Saxon troops. He took a chance, stopped at the first group of Rangers he met and imperatively demanded the way to 'headquarters'! Somewhat naively, they told him. So, going from group to group, Alexandre at last reached General Ryder's headquarters. He found there, besides the General, John Knox, who had landed with him. The two friends fell into each others arms:

'Why haven't you entered the town yet? Algiers is undefended, you must take advantage of this immediately. This afternoon, it will be too late!'

John Knox translated this plea to General Ryder who replied prudently: 'I must first of all regroup my troops. To-morrow we will attack.'

Beside himself with fury, Alexandre broke into a torrent of abuse against the General. He knew the risks his friends had run during the night, he knew the risk they ran of being shot within twelve hours. One could well talk of military tactics, of rules to be obeyed! A few detach-

<sup>1</sup> 'We have one passion only, France,' General de Gaulle had declared in the Albert Hall, London, on June 18th, 1942. And he had added: 'National unity is contained in victory and for us, who have chosen victory, the first aim is to revive national unity by fighting.'

<sup>2</sup> On that same day, Radio-Vichy, in fact well informed, formally denied that General Giraud had spoken on the Algiers radio. But as so often happened in later days, the Algerian public was much less well informed on what was happening in Algiers than the man in the street of Vichy, London, Berlin or New York.



ments only were needed; they would merely have to appear, without fighting, and they would be in possession of the open town.

When Alexandre in his rage alluded to tactics borrowed from the purest traditions of the Indian Sioux, a British General who was present and understood French perfectly could not help bursting into laughter.

John Knox translated as well as he could the abusive tirade.

'It is not possible,' repeated General Ryder. 'I have only 2,400 men to control the whole of the province of Algiers and I have no heavy war armour.'

'If your 2,400 men wait until to-morrow, they will find 12,000 garrison troops in Algiers who are at present locked in their barracks; they will find also 30,000 armed Legionnaires. Not to mention the neighbouring garrisons.'

The altercation was violent. It took place in front of some twenty staff officers, quite nonplussed. John Knox, who had grasped the full meaning of the predicament, pleaded at length and at last convinced General Ryder of the necessity for immediate attack. It was he who, at that moment, with all the authority conferred on him by his activities during the previous months, saved the situation.

Yet, in spite of this, the American troops spent the Sunday skirting the town, hemming in a city which was undefended, so as to seize it according to the rules of war, by the south. They only entered the town in the evening.

Hours were slipping by and the atmosphere grew tenser. One cannot indefinitely keep up such a large-scale bluff. An officer of the 5th Chasseurs escaped from the police headquarters at nine o'clock. He hastily went up to the barracks of his regiment. From the conversations overheard during the night between the conspirators he was fairly clear as to the small forces of the rebellion. He roused his men.

Almost at the same hour, a battalion of militia also rose in arms. These were the first cracks. At the police headquarters, José Aboulker was snowed under with anxious telephone calls:

'Post Office here. What shall we do? Things are beginning to waver.'

'Wireless station here. There is a platoon of military police in the street. Shall we surrender if they attack? Or shall we open fire?'

Against his will, Aboulker gave orders to surrender.

He decided to go and see his men himself and to leave the responsibility

of the police headquarters to Guy Cohen: he pushed a tommy-gun into his hands. Cohen groaned in despair:

'But I do not know how to use it.'

'That doesn't matter. Besides, you will do as the others, you will surrender. . . .'

Their captivity could only last a few hours and, if they were not shot before, on the next day they would celebrate the entry of Allied troops.

Was he as sure as he tried to make out? The lack of action on the part of the Americans was most disappointing. Were they going to let the Vichyists recover from the blow which had merely dazed them, regroup once more and, thanks to their numerical superiority, throw the Americans back to the sea? Who could foresee what would happen then? Within forty-eight hours, if they were so urged, the Germans could bring up reinforcements and supplies by air. . . .

In the morning — this was the last stroke — Darlan was set free by a platoon of 5th Chasseurs led by the Commandant Dorange, General Juin's ordnance officer. The Admiral hastily took refuge at Fort Lempereur, whence he ordered the resistance. He was playing a double game: if the landing failed, he would draw from his attitude the same advantages as those which Boisson had drawn from his victorious defence of Dakar. If, on the contrary, the Americans were successful, he wanted to have enough trump cards to make it necessary for them to come to terms with him, and with no other. . . .

From that moment, the conspirators had lost the fight. At eleven o'clock, Dreyfus, who, with his little group of comrades had taken the General Post Office during the night and barricaded himself in it, saw that a siege was being laid to the building. A military policeman, waving a white flag, walked across the Square Laferrière. Dreyfus came out of the building to meet him. There was a short discussion; the besieged refused to give in. The two men parted. Dreyfus, returning to his comrades, was brought down by a bullet in the back which killed him on the spot.<sup>1</sup> While his men were running to his aid the besiegers occupied the square.

Almost at the same hour, in front of the police headquarters a Vichyist colonel, Colonel Jacquin, as he passed in his car, let off a round of gunfire on Captain Pilafort. Pilafort, mortally wounded in the stomach, managed

<sup>1</sup> His murderer, the adjutant Constant, received the Croix de guerre for this heroic deed.

before collapsing to draw his revolver and fire. Others did the same. When the Colonel was drawn from his car, he had fourteen bullets in his body.

These two bloody incidents marked the end of an astonishing truce which, had the Americans but taken advantage of it, would have enabled them not only to spare French and Allied blood which was to flow needlessly during the following hours, but would have entirely altered the course of events during the succeeding days. One could harp indefinitely on this lost opportunity; it is quite certain that during these twelve wasted hours the 'temporary expedient' was born.

At six o'clock that morning, Darlan was definitely a compromised man, a prisoner, liable to be shot that very day. At noon, he was Commander-in-Chief of the French Forces, in a state of open hostility as regards the Anglo-Saxon contingents. It was with him that one had to deal, as one power with another.<sup>1</sup> The responsibility of the American command in these circumstances was obvious. But not less was the responsibility of Mr. Robert Murphy who, within the space of twenty-four hours, had altered his plans and rejected the French support previously used by him. I hope it will be understood that I speak here from the French standpoint.

This reversal in Mr. Murphy's policy is marked by an immediate reaction.<sup>2</sup> On that Sunday afternoon he once more faced Admiral Darlan. Both men looked drawn through lack of sleep. Their situation had changed. Darlan was free. But Mr. Robert Murphy was the conqueror.

He arrived at Fort Lempereur in a car, with General Ryder; John Knox was at the wheel. For the first time since he came to Algiers, the semi-official American military attaché had donned the uniform of a colonel. Whilst the car climbed the hill towards the Voirol column, Knox occasionally bent his head over the driving-wheel. Bullets whistled around them.

The general situation was ridiculous. From the sea, ships continued to bombard the Admiralty. Fort Lempereur's batteries continued to retort,

<sup>1</sup> What was the use of having made provision for General Mast in Algeria and General Bethouard in Morocco to deal with all questions concerning an Armistice, should a fight arise?

<sup>2</sup> This *volte-face* coincided with difficulties and misunderstandings which arose in Gibraltar between Generals Giraud and Eisenhower.

## THE LANDING

firing on the Allied fleet whilst Mr. Murphy crossed the threshold of the fortress, respectfully saluted by the guard, and retired with Admiral Darlan to discuss the situation. The United States representative stood on the very spot from which they were shooting at his compatriots. True, if he had been killed, it would have been by an American shell.

In these circumstances, the atmosphere was tense, the discussion bitter. They bargained. Mr. Murphy had perhaps an ulterior motive, but he did not commit himself to anything. After all, General Giraud might arrive at any minute. What he wanted from Darlan was the order to cease fire. But the Admiral was adamant: he did not wish this absurd battle to come to an end. He did not wish to abandon his trump cards without receiving something in exchange.

Mr. Murphy began to feel irritated. A decisive argument was to fall from the skies. Whilst dusk fell over the white town, planes which had been flying over Algiers for some time dropped first one bomb, then another, in the Agha docks. It was precisely 6.30.

At 6.40, Darlan gave instructions to General Juin to sign the order surrendering Algiers. It was General Ryder who countersigned it.<sup>1</sup>

Robert Murphy left Fort Lempereur exhausted but radiant. Both he and Knox returned to their homes to sleep the sleep of the just — at seven o'clock.

Let me quote a few pages from my diary to complete the story of this extraordinary day and to give the atmosphere:

I met Gilbert Comte in the early evening. His elegant nonchalance had vanished. Very excited, he told me what had happened during the day. He was tired and dying of thirst. Not a café was open. Life had definitely become impossible. Of course he had participated with the others in the events of the night. He had been arrested with Joxe in the afternoon, by soldiers who took them to an empty room in the Villa des Oliviers. They expected at least to be shot without trial. After half an hour's captivity, encouraged by the silence, they noticed that their guards had departed leaving the door open. It was an episode worthy of a South-American revolution.

<sup>1</sup> At that moment the first American detachments began to descend the Rue Michelet and entered the Summer Palace.

I have just been told the first anecdote of this memorable day. The receptionist of the Hôtel d'Angleterre — where members of the Italian Armistice commission are staying — got a telephone call during the Sunday morning:

'Can I reserve a room?'

'Sorry, sir, we have no rooms. Everything is taken.'

'Oh! But aren't you expecting some departures soon?'

The *Dernières Nouvelles* has not been printed. No one knows what turn events will take. The information given on the wireless is contradictory. London is difficult to hear and this evening Radio-Algiers has not yet resumed its broadcasts interrupted after it gave out military music this morning. The town is empty. As soon as bombs fell people vanished. They have all gone to stay with their relations at El Biar, or at Hydra, or at Bouzareua.

I walked home to the Rue Sadi Carnot. The petrol tanks of the Agha were in flames: the fires started in the depots of pressed straw. The whole district was lighted up. As I left the centre of the town, the only Americans to be seen were a few dozen prisoners seized about midday by the Cinquième Chasseurs and taken to the barracks.

One after another, the petrol dumps went up. The gunfire has ceased, but Allied planes still drone away in the sky.

I went along with a militia man who had 'finished for the day'; I did not dare ask what kind of day it had been. On the whole, he seemed pleased with the way events had gone. Before leaving, I noticed that I was carrying my shoes in my hand. I had removed them four miles away, my feet hurt so much. Neither of us had noticed, our brains were in a whirl.

When I arrived at Kouba, I was told about the comic side of local events. When the Mayor was ordered by telephone to hoist the French flag on the town hall, he misunderstood. Tired out by a sleepless night, half-crazy from the gun-fire, he had hung up saying angrily:

'Never will I hoist an American flag on my town hall. I would rather die.'

Wishing to die in company, he immediately called on the local

## THE LANDING

Legionnaires 'to arms'. Ten minutes later, a platoon of Legionnaires emerged at the double, armed one with an old chassepot rifle, one with a fork, another with a bludgeon; the butcher from the corner of the street with his best knife. They barricaded themselves in, waiting for death to come. In the evening, death having failed to come, they returned, each to his own home, for dinner.

And so ended, for me, this historic day.

## CHAPTER VI

### ADMIRAL DARLAN

*Que le gascon y arrive si le Français n'y peut aller*

MONTAIGNE

ON November 9th, at the Hôtel Saint-Georges, thirty-six hours after the landings, Darlan met for the third time Mr. Robert Murphy and General Clark whose 'host' he was to be for a few days. The diplomat had left his office at the consulate and moved into the Saint-Georges, which the Americans had selected for their headquarters.

On this occasion the three men met of their own free will without the compulsion of outside events. Algiers presented a picture that no one would have dared imagine a week previously. The trams were running again, passing on their way lorry-loads of Allied soldiers already making eyes at the girls. Traffic crossings were controlled by English red caps, while the lookers-on were half reticent, half admiring, but never hostile. From time to time there was a little applause. In the evening, fraternization was made easier by the exchange of chocolate, cigarettes and pints in the cafés, eternal friendships came to birth before the bar counter. The soldiers brought handfuls of notes from their pockets and the waiter had only to help himself.

In the Rue d'Isly, sailors picked up girls and ordered four beers at a time to make sure of being served. Already the girls were singing the tune which became such a hit in Algiers during those November days:

Oh, Salomé, Salomé, did you see Salomé  
Standing there, with her tummy all bare . . .

In this carnivalesque city, abandoning herself like a drunken slut, this city where the craziest rumours found credence, at least for an hour<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I heard successively from the most reliable people that the Fleet had left Toulon to fight the Allies, that it had left Toulon to join them, and that Weygand had arrived in Algiers by 'plane. This latter piece of information was communicated to me by Jean Castet, editor of the *Bulletin Central d'Ecoutes Radiophoniques*, a secret newspaper founded by General Weygand when he was in North Africa. When I heard of Weygand's arrest, I thought it was a false rumour like the others. Moreover, in Algiers at this time 'governments' were being formed in every bar (not only in the bars, alas!). Triumvirates were named: Weygand-Darlan-Giraud? Giraud-Darlan-Juin?

Darlan was preparing himself for the most important political game he was ever to play. The day before he released the order of the Armistice for the Algiers region.

Now he wanted to 'negotiate'. This deal of his with the United States marked the extreme point of the reversal of policy towards which he had been working for the past eighteen months. Between Berchtesgaden in May 1941 and Algiers in November 1942, the pendulum had swung completely over.

It most certainly was not the first time Darlan had changed his coat in the course of his career, rich in profitable abjurations and supple compromises, a career successful only as a result of his machinations.<sup>1</sup>

Darlan came from the land of Henri IV who thought that Paris was well worth a mass. Those who knew him in the Rue Royale, as *chef de cabinet* of successive ministries, often radical-socialists, remember this cynical and intelligent man, who conducted himself in despicable fashion with politicians whom he despised, but with whom he served a fruitful apprenticeship. With those he wished to conquer, he employed his very real charm which he himself believed irresistible. He wanted to get to the top.<sup>2</sup> He understood very early that the only way to get to the top was through politics. This sailor was the son of a politician. His father was Garde des Sceaux in Méline's cabinet. Georges Leygues was his godfather. On the death of the first, he inherited a part of the Panama 'fiches'—crushing documents for many French public men or their descendants. On the death of the second, he inherited the nullions of the famous Chauchard.

<sup>1</sup> Jean-François Darlan was born at Nérac (Lot et Garonne) on August 7th, 1881. Lieutenant de vaisseau in 1912, capitaine de corvette in 1918, capitaine de frégate in 1920, capitaine de vaisseau in 1926, contre-amiral in 1929, vice-amiral in 1932. During the 1914-1918 war, he commanded a battery of naval artillery. In 1920, he was Chief of Staff of the small China squadron. On his return he commanded the training ship gunboats *Chamois* and *André*. In 1926 he was assistant chief and afterwards chief of the military secretariat of Georges Leygues (Minister for the Navy). He increased considerably the importance of this Ministry. In order to get his promotion to rear-admiral he left to command the training cruiser *Edgar Quinet*. As a rear-admiral he commanded, without leaving Paris, a non-existent flotilla of cruisers still under construction, with the result that his promotion to the rank of vice-admiral was attacked before the Council of State as being in conflict with the stipulations for promotion concerning service at sea. The plaintiff withdrew his case—and was immediately promoted. Darlan thus attained the rank of vice-admiral without ever having commanded a fighting ship. He became Chief of the Naval Staff in 1936, under the Popular Front.

<sup>2</sup> In an article of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (April 1st, 1940), which is nothing but a panegyric from the first line to the last, the 'predestined chief' is defined by this sentence, unbelievable in its innocent naiveté: 'Darlan has always been guided by the thought of finding at the right moment the position in which he could distinguish himself.' Thus is a man given away by his friends.



To the man with money, who is in the know, all doors are open. As early as 1908, he was attached to parliamentary commissions. From then on he constantly frequented government circles. French statesmen succeeding each other in the inter-war period were only too happy to find a sailor who spoke their language and who assured them:

'I am the only republican admiral.'

His opportunism led him to leave Dunkirk hurriedly in 1936, when he learnt the result of the elections, and go to Paris to pay his respects to Léon Blum. He, the future leader of a Navy which had remained in great measure royalist in its soul and its traditions.

This visit had fruitful results. Four months later, he was Chief of the Naval Staff.<sup>1</sup> From then on, more than ever before, his rule of life was: politics first. He wrote it quite openly in the *Revue Militaire Générale*: 'The task of the Navy is at once political, strategical and tactical.' One can imagine what would have happened, in any case, at that date, to a general who would have openly considered his troops as an instrument of praetorianism.

He got his apologist 'Fidus' to write the following: 'What distinguishes Darlan is his aptitude for grasping and solving any problem. He has adapted himself to all circumstances, being in turn negotiator, naval expert, diplomat, organizer, administrator. He succeeded in every command, in every mission he undertook.'<sup>2</sup>

In these lines, coming almost directly from the Admiral's own pen, the Darlan of Vichy stands out in the crude light of day — his four ministries, his administration of a subjugated France through pliant admirals, his dreams of being consul in North Africa, and from the moment of the Armistice, the grip that the personality of Talleyrand had on him. In truth he possessed all the bad qualities of Talleyrand.

How many times, during the 'phoney war', receiving visitors at his headquarters in Maintenon he enlarged on these themes. The setting was well prepared, the guest would always find the Admiral seated behind a spacious desk, pipe in mouth, plunged in meditation. Through the half-open door of the adjoining room it was impossible not to catch

<sup>1</sup> This did not prevent him, of course, from stigmatizing on the wireless, in no uncertain terms (May 1941) leaders and legislators who heaped up mistakes, were brought to look after other interests than ours, allowed the morale of the nation to be undermined and legalized sanction and disorder.

<sup>2</sup> *Revue des Deux Mondes*: id.

an impressive glimpse, of an immense map of the oceans of the world

No matter what happened to be his estimation of their character, Darlan always took pains to win over his visitors. He described to them what a complete instrument the Navy was, how subtle the brains of the sailors. It was the Navy which had at first organized the Empire before the creation of the Ministry of Colonies. And if a simple ship's captain could be entrusted with political missions or treat on a footing of equality with consuls in foreign ports, judge how important a role could be played by a senior officer of distinction.

In brief, Darlan identified his own fortune with that of France. If his listener happened to be a politician, he never forgot to remind him that his own father was 'one of them' and that he had been brought up to respect republican institutions. He let it be understood that he had none of the gullibility generally attributed to those who follow the sea. In the words of the good apologist quoted above 'He was initiated into political life from childhood.'

A clientele was not long in gathering around this admiral who was listened to by the government. Officers modelled their career on his: they lost nothing thereby, for they were soon well-noted in the Navy and got their nickname, 'les A D D' (amis de Darlan).

If one takes the trouble to follow the careers of this camarilla, one notices that they all reached high posts, often without passing through intermediary stages.<sup>1</sup> On November 8th, 1942, a notorious A D D. was Vichy Naval Minister.<sup>2</sup> Another one, Admiral Fenard, was waiting for his 'boss' at Algiers.

When, by chance, at Maintenon, the conversation deviated to questions of direct naval interest, the Admiral voiced opinions which are to-day a little out of date.

'A plane will always be powerless against a ship,' he once declared to a journalist, 'because of the cone of fire that the ship can put up over it.'<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Admiral's own career had not proceeded without stirring up trouble and sometimes tragic incidents. The sensational suicide of Admiral M. left bloodstains on the stars of the new Chief of the Naval Staff, Darlan.

<sup>2</sup> Auphan, like Fenard, moved in Darlan's orbit from the time of Georges Leygues. When someone said in front of Auphan that Darlan was 'a good sailor', he added with a smile 'Yes, good at manoeuvring.'

<sup>3</sup> In point of fact, in September 1939, the chief weakness of French warships was their A A defences. The most modern, the *Jean Bart* and the *Richelieu*, had only a very insufficient A A defence. It is true that the British Admiralty made the same mistake and paid for it dearly before it was rectified.

But with little persuasion, he preferred to follow a train of thought in a domain that was still, for him, *terra incognita* — that of international politics.

'We are a maritime people. It was Trafalgar that changed our destiny. Let us found our policy on Berlin: to Germany the land, to France the sea.'

This declaration was made in 1936 in the midst of the Abyssinian problem. The Parisian journalist who reported it forced him back on his defences. He let himself go:

'Yes, the English are our enemies, our real hereditary enemies. From their lair in the Channel Islands they spy on us incessantly. We cannot move a ship between Cherbourg and Brest without their knowing it. For my part, it is quite simple: I had an ancestor killed at Trafalgar. Our family has always hated perfidious Albion.'

Nevertheless, 1939 found the anti-British Admiral at the head of the squadrons which were to co-operate closely with the Royal Navy. That did not worry him.

'It is unimportant,' he said light-heartedly. 'The people at the British Admiralty are all right. And, between sailors . . .'<sup>1</sup>

Yet he continued to nourish his rancour. For a long time now he had had the ambition to become supreme commander of all the armed forces of France. He finally perceived the senseless character of this intrigue and became at once the champion of the contrary thesis, proving in a further article in the *Revue Militaire Générale*, the disaster that a unified command would be for the Navy.

'In France we have had two examples of single command: Louvois and Napoleon. The results were La Hague and Trafalgar. Germany had the example of Wilhelm II: the result was Scapa Flow.'

This was well said. Thus he fell back on the defence of the total independence of the Fleet. There his humiliation was great for he found himself in 1939 under the command of Sir Dudley Pound.

The War. There was not much fighting at sea. François Darlan's ambition continued to grow. He intrigued in curious fashion for the award of a Marshal's baton to General Gamelin: in exchange, he might expect for himself the resurrection of the impressive title: Admiral of France. There again he failed. In his bitterness, he judged harshly but

<sup>1</sup> 'Between sailors', Darlan was to cover the Royal Navy with odious accusations in 1941, when he evoked the memory of Dunkirk.

lucidly Daladier, Gamelin and the clique of generals who were leading us unawares to disaster. Until May 1940 he made a great show of anti-German feelings in sharp contrast with the opinions so recently and so liberally expressed. Until May, I repeat, and no later, for at the beginning of that month a decisive event took place in the Admiral's career. Marshal Pétain visited him at the Admiralty on May 5th. To-day we know only too well the portent of the old man's visit to France at that time and his fortnight's stay in Paris — a fortnight spent getting into touch with the worst defeatists in Parliament. Anatole de Monzie, in his volume of *Memoirs Ci-devant*, tells in breach of confidence how the Marshal foreshadowed the launching of the coming German offensive and left Paris to return to Spain, after declaring that 'his presence would soon be needed' — a declaration full of meaning for the initiated at the Quai d'Orsay who were well aware of the contacts between Pétain and the German Ambassador in Madrid, von Stohrer.

Darlan himself described Pétain's visit in an interview with Henri Béraud published by *Gringoire* on May 30th, 1941:

Up till then I had had very few personal contacts with the Marshal. At the committees on which he sat, I had always been struck by the pertinacity of his judgments and the clarity of his summing up. A very minor personage myself, overawed by his clear blue eyes, having had no contact with him except on official occasions, I had never been able to talk to him frankly.

On May 5th, he came to the French Admiralty and we had a very long conversation. Then he inspected our command set-up in great detail and asked a certain number of precise questions to which he got equally precise answers.

Everything he saw and heard must have satisfied him for, before leaving, he said to me: 'At last I have seen something in working order. My congratulations, Admiral.'

Then he added: 'We must stand shoulder to shoulder. Can I count on you?' 'Naturally, Monsieur le Maréchal, I am completely at your service.'

I admit that at the time I did not realize the full sense of his question. I knew that things were not going well, but I had no idea that they were already in such a perilous state.

Making a hasty survey, the Marshal, arriving straight from Spain, had immediately summed up the poor situation in which we had fallen.

A second and more important interview took place at a much more tragic moment, on June 12th. Once again, it is Darlan who speaks:

We were together at Briare, at General Weygand's headquarters where a meeting of the Supreme Council was being held. The Marshal took me in his car to meet Churchill who was arriving by plane from England.

He told me how revolted he was at the incapacity of the existing government to take any decision whatsoever. 'We need a sort of consulate,' he declared, 'and if I am asked to state my choice for the role of first consul, I shall name you, my friend.'

'That is a very fine present you are offering, Monsieur le Maréchal. I am not at all anxious to have it.'

'Yes, yes, I have thought it over carefully. You are the only one who has made a success of his job, therefore it is you who should undertake the task.'

One can imagine the revelation for the Admiral — power was henceforth offered to him in the form of dividends of defeat. He was to get his chance from a government of defeatists, for he could no longer, at that stage, ignore the tendencies represented by the Marshal. Already, on the following day, his role became capital if indirect, in an incident that is now public knowledge.

On June 13th, during a meeting of the Cabinet at the Château de Nivray, Weygand, having painted a sombre picture of the situation, concluded:

'Gentlemen, I have very good reasons if I say that we can no longer delay in asking for an armistice. Serious trouble has broken out in Paris and Thorez is said to be already installed at the Elysée. *I have the news from the Admiralty.*'

We know how Georges Mandel opposed this affirmation and disproved it by telephoning the Prefect of the Seine, Langeron. He burst out laughing at the other end of the wire. But the fact is significant. In this attempt to employ the Communist peril as blackmail, Darlan took

sides resolutely with Pétain, Weygand and Baudouin, the defeatists. Pétain literally bought him with the only currency that had any value in his eyes: access to power.

Those who lived through the Bordeaux days tell how Admiral Darlan, who had been made a minister on June 16th, went about with beaming face and supped joyfully at the 'Chapon Fin' on the eve of the Armistice.

But his temperament led him to take cover. On June 19th—God knows why?—he nevertheless gave the order in code to his officers to continue the struggle with indomitable energy.<sup>1</sup> And when ministers and parliamentarians desired to continue the struggle in North Africa, he put the *Massilia* at their disposal. Furthermore, he signed embarkation orders which the crestfallen voyagers later exhibited in their defence when Vichy basely accused them of deserting.

To what degree at that stage did Darlan again play a double game? To what degree was he the unwitting executioner of those who desired at all costs to exile the resisters—the Mandels, Campinichis, Viénots, Mendès-Frances, Jean Zays, Daladiers, and to discredit them by this 'flight'? We know that Herriot and Jeanneney just escaped this trap. . . .

It is certain that during those frightful days Darlan gave much thought to his Fleet. This was normal enough, for he had moulded the Fleet with love. But it is no less evident that when the Armistice conditions were revealed to him, conditions guaranteeing a semi-liberty to the Fleet and the certainty that Germany would raise no claims against it at the Peace Treaty, he was not far from considering the Armistice with the same eye as Weygand and Pétain who saw in it the safeguard of the social order in France.

Moreover, in the choice he had to make in the course of those tragic hours between the role of an Admiral sailing at the head of his squadrons, to save them from the enemy, and that of Minister in a conquered government, he did not hesitate. The politician chose for him.

What a game he was going to be able to play with an intact Fleet that he would not hesitate to risk as the stake.

The cannonade of Oran anchored him definitely in his collaboration

<sup>1</sup> God knows why? For he withdrew this order two days later, ordering the 'cease fire' and, later in July, when justifying himself for passing in 48 hours from 'indomitable energy' to total passivity, his major argument was as follows: 'Since May 20th the Admiral of the Fleet had the conviction that the French army would be obliged to abandon the struggle.' (Note to the Staffs and Maritime Prefects.) Since May 20th!

policy At the same time it opened for Germany perspectives of real understanding with this man to whom they had not yet accorded their confidence and who now spontaneously offered them guarantees The blood of fifteen hundred French sailors was the pledge for the Admiral's offer of service And the turn of events forced him on, obliging him to continue, almost to the point where there was no turning back, on the road he had chosen

Vichy was now coming to life, Vichy and its hotel room government in which Darlan was to play an ever more important part

He could now give full rein to his anglophobia, for it had become again a profitable, and was soon to be an official, attitude, with the blockade and English designs on the Empire, Dakar and later Syria as its leitmotiv Whole pages could be quoted of expressions of hatred pronounced publicly by Darlan against those he called 'assassins', 'traitors', 'famine-mongers', 'highway robbers' in one single speech (May 5th, 1942) six months before he became their ally once again

But speeches mean nothing Acts weigh heavier in the balance <sup>1</sup> In fact, during the year 1941, all the acts of the Vichy Government were the work of Darlan who promulgated and signed them, sometimes as the Président du Conseil, sometimes as Minister of the Interior or of Foreign Affairs

It is in this capacity that, on May 11th, 1941, he went to Berchtesgaden as Hacha, as Teleki, as Antonescu had done before him The ground had been prepared in the course of a preliminary interview with Abetz, in Paris, on May 7th Darlan was preceded by an excellent recommendation from the Ambassador <sup>2</sup> He went in a softened frame of mind, through the revelation of a large-scale plan of which Hitler was to speak to

<sup>1</sup> The accusation was also made against Darlan that during this time he handed over to Admiral Raeder very important information concerning the British Navy and, notably concerning the Azdic system of submarine detection He was also accused on the grounds of an exchange of letters between the French Delegation at Wiesbaden and the German commission dated March 26th, 1941, of having handed over to General Milch two prototypes of the Douglas D B 7 As far as I know there is no material proof of the truth of these accusations but it seems probable that the Admiral collaborated on the technical plane with the German Admiralty

<sup>2</sup> 'I have spoken personally with Admiral Darlan He is a man who makes an excellent impression He has conserved his prestige intact For the purpose of collaboration men must be put forward who do not show systematic hostility towards Germans Now, Admiral Darlan, apart from his other qualities, is anti-British' It was not the first contact between Darlan and Abetz As the Marshal's delegate in Paris for the Return of the Aglon's ashes on December 15th, 1940, Darlan had already 'contacted' there the German authorities

him and that he had glimpsed beneath a corner of the veil lifted by Abetz.

The Chancellor put his demands plainly: the placing of the whole of French industry at the service of the Reich, complete control of our economic life, foreign markets, exchange markets, increased deliveries of raw materials, and rolling stock, and even of wheat which was already beginning to be seriously short in France. He also wanted to be given the control of Bizerta.<sup>1</sup> But against this crushing bill that Darlan was to present to the French people, here is the magnificent compensation already hinted at by Abetz. With what diabolical cleverness Hitler dangled it before the eyes of his listener. 'When the English are beaten, Europe will need a formidable navy to defend itself.'<sup>2</sup> The French Fleet must needs be the kernel. And why should Admiral Darlan, who was the soul of the French Fleet, not be the supreme chief of this European navy in the same way as Marshal Goering will be the supreme chief of Europe's Air Force?

The Admiral returned, conquered, from his pilgrimage, dazzled by the prospects offered him and his ambition whipped up by the vague promise he had received. He was now at the peak of power, and his anglophobia in full swing. He had found his vocation: having failed to become Admiral of France, he would be Admiral of the New Europe. For at that time who could entertain doubts of the success of German arms?

This cunning, prudent man ceased for a moment to behave as a statesman. He made one irremediable declaration after another with an astonishing gratuitousness: 'The Germans are more generous, of a more comprehensive humanity than the British.' Even Laval did not go so far as to use such language. No one asked Darlan to pronounce them. Such words follow him like the noise of a tin can tied to the tail of a cur.

Back in France, he still had to explain himself with public opinion. The reactions of the average Frenchman and those of Admiral Darlan were not in the same key. He felt this so well that he resorted to pleading: 'In the course of conversations, held with the approval of Marshal Pétain and the Government between himself and the leader of the German Empire, Hitler did not ask for the Fleet, nor our colonies, nor that we

<sup>1</sup> The Admiral got out of this demand by arguing artfully that Weygand was formally opposed to it. This argument, among others, was brought up when the ex-Commander-in-Chief was sacked.

<sup>2</sup> Defend itself against whom? Seven months before America's entry into the war, the anti-American intention was evident.



should declare war on Great Britain.' But what Hitler did ask for was not mentioned. The people of France learned to interpret these silences and understood. 'On the issue of these negotiations depends the future of France', the Admiral added identifying his destiny in a strange manner with that of his country. 'We must choose between life and death.'

In unofficial company he was more explicit. At the end of May he made an incredible speech before the Ecole des Cadres at Uriage. I quote his words:

Collaboration with Germany is the only reasonable course: the most important point is to furnish the Reich with the arms it needs to bring the war to a rapid close. So far we have not contributed sufficiently to this end; we shall do better. In this way it will perhaps be possible to preserve the moral integrity of the nation.

We shall probably have to cede Alsace-Lorraine. Doubtless French Flanders will have to be abandoned but that will be rather an exchange than a cession. Germany will offer us Wallonia and French Switzerland.

Thus we shall preserve the moral integrity of our Empire. In this matter I am glad to be able to tell you that the Armistice Commission praises our methods of colonization. Germany thinks that France deserves to keep her Empire, while the Reich will find abundant compensations in the exploitation of the British colonies. In addition, as far as concerns us, Tunisia will become a Franco-Italian condominium and Morocco will be shared between Germany, Spain and France.

I am informed by one of those present that this speech staggered the audience. It is not difficult to believe it. Such a manifesto can only be read and re-read, not commented on. If I have quoted this characteristic passage at length it is because, in my opinion, it marks the culminating point in the active collaboration of Darlan with Germany, the top of the swing of the pendulum and, above all, because as far as History is concerned, it kills for ever all possibility for the Admiral to be considered a great statesman. Never did such a docile lamb hold out its neck to the slaughterer, never did a more resigned booby reveal to his adversary the few aces of his losing hand.

But what in the background did the scheming Pierre Laval think of all this, Laval who was already working for Darlan's undoing, undermining his pedestal by little blows? He swore from that moment an inexorable vendetta against the Admiral. He had learnt that Darlan was on the winning side in the plot of December 13th, 1940, which led to Laval being thrown out.<sup>1</sup> Like Peyrouton and Alibert, Darlan must pay.

But events continued to determine the career of this astonishing sailor. The rosy atmosphere of the return from Berchtesgaden did not last. Germany engaged in a hopeless war against Russia. Conflict with the United States was inevitable. The brilliant perspectives of a European navy were now clouded: they were only the corollary of a total German victory. Doubt was slowly creeping into the Admiral's mind. Had he backed the wrong horse? Was there still time to call in his stakes?

The more pressing Laval's offensive became, the less assured was Darlan's defence. Perhaps he was already contemplating a possible *volte-face*; in any case, he began prudently to contact Admiral Leahy to whom he accorded slight tokens of good will.<sup>2</sup>

This was known in Vichy and suspected in Paris. Laval took care that it was reported to Berlin. Strong pressure was brought to bear on the Marshal to take back the man whom he had expelled ignominiously in December 1940. Pétain accepted the humiliation and yielded. Darlan paid the price by losing all his portfolios,<sup>3</sup> but remaining Pétain's heir apparent and, by a singular irony of fate, was invested with the powers of Commander-in-Chief of all the French armed forces.<sup>4</sup>

This was the time of General Giraud's escape. Very soon from Switzer-

<sup>1</sup> Two years later to the day, during a press conference in Vichy, Laval spoke of this December 13th, 1940, telling how he heard of a conversation in the house of Dumoulin de la Barthète between Darlan, Huntziger, Peyrouton and Alibert. 'The latter reported it to me,' he admitted indiscreetly. Laval's fate had been settled in the course of this conversation. 'So it will not be necessary to go to the Cabinet meeting at five,' said one member. 'On the contrary,' said Darlan, 'let us go. In that way he will not suspect anything.' 'In April,' concluded Laval, 'I saw Darlan at Chateldon and I told him in the presence of de Brinon that I held him responsible for the 13th December.' Thus Darlan could not be ignorant of Laval's hatred for him.

<sup>2</sup> More than once Admiral Leahy asked Darlan, even before the landings had been decided upon. 'What would be France's attitude if the United States carried out a military operation in French territory?' Darlan replied 'If you come in strength we will welcome you, otherwise we will resist.' His attitude on November 7th and 8th was already prefigured in this astonishing phrase.

<sup>3</sup> He had already handed over the Ministry of the Interior to Pucheu in July.

<sup>4</sup> To the criticism that he made of this supreme command four years before, could now be added a new and terrible example: yes, Louvois gave us La Hague, yes, Napoleon brought us Trafalgar, but Darlan will make a present of Toulon.

land he put himself at Marshal Pétain's orders. He had several conversations with the Admiral. Laval looked on him with displeasure, the escaped General being a prodigious handicap for the plans of the new master of France. In Vichy itself, Giraud could not go a step without being followed by Laval's spies. He was obliged to submit to the humiliating interview of Moulines. . . .

In all this episode Darlan remained passive. Just before his death he was to declare that his intention 'had been to work with Giraud for the reorganization of the French Army. The publicity created around his escape and the anger of the Germans had prevented this.' When Giraud left Vichy for a country residence to await events, the Admiral remained entirely aloof.

But what had transpired in the course of their conversations? Few people know with certainty and no traces remain. Or rather, there remained one — a plan that was ripening in the brains of a small group of officers of the Deuxième and Troisième Bureaux. This project was the result of the Giraud-Darlan conversations of April 1942. By different routes — the patriotism of the first, the flair of the second — the two men had arrived at an identical conclusion: that it would be criminal to neglect the possibility of American action on a large scale in North Africa and the chances it would offer to France.

Hence the plan providing on the day of the American action for the concentration of thirty thousand men of the Armistice army in the Massif Central and of a further thirty thousand in the region of Sète<sup>1</sup> in order to cover the departure of the Fleet; the dispatch to North Africa of all technicians, the Military and Naval Schools, N.C.O.s and all demobilized officers called up in haste. Sixty thousand men of the Armistice army were to be sacrificed to gain the few days necessary and save what could be saved.

This plan was sufficiently advanced for several Generals to be advised of what was afoot.

All this does not mean that unity was achieved at the time between Giraud and Darlan. They only considered and studied in common a plausible hypothesis. They prepared to face certain eventualities in the

<sup>1</sup> These thirty thousand men were to effect their junction with Allied contingents making a possible diversionary attack on the French Mediterranean Coast. The unfortunate adventure of General de Latre de Tassigny was the sequel of this project.

interest of France. But without mutual sympathy, each kept his liberty of action. Giraud retired to his château to reconstitute an embryo staff, Darlan multiplied his contacts not only with Admiral Leahy but with Mr. Pinckney Tuck, his chief assistant. It was important to make known in Washington that the Commander-in-Chief of the French Forces nourished no animosity against the United States.

At the same time neutral travellers arriving in Switzerland from Vichy reported strange statements. The Admiral had been heard to declare that the chances of an Anglo-Saxon victory were growing daily and that Germany's defeat was beginning to appear inevitable.

One can believe in the sincerity of this opinion, for Darlan went even further, seeking to enter into contact with certain resistance movements within the country. He knew that these elements, despite their great activity, were not yet co-ordinated, and were desperately looking for a leader. He was cynical enough to let it be known that he would be prepared to play the role at the right moment. He enlarged on the advantages that France would get from this arrangement. The resistance movements received the Admiral's advances with disgust, but they did not absolutely exclude the idea of using him one day.<sup>1</sup> This was the moment of the first overtures of M. Lemaigre-Dubreuil to General Giraud, and the last attempts of Mr. Robert Murphy to bring General Weygand into the picture.

The two Generals were closely watched<sup>2</sup> and there is no doubt that Darlan was kept posted by his information service. There is formal proof of this in two very important facts, which not only illustrate the Admiral's political volte-face, now complete, but prove that his candidature had at least been taken into consideration by the State Department before the landings.

These facts are the following: An officer working in close touch with the plotters in Algiers and more especially with the pair Lemaigre-

<sup>1</sup> The clandestine paper *Liberation* alludes to his advances in its number of September 15th, 1942, in the following terms: 'You will see that no man, no matter how many stars he wears, no matter how great his ardour to run to the help of victory at the eleventh hour, if he has befouled himself with this National Revolution of slaves, will be received by us. Useful perhaps, utilized doubtless, for all means to victory are good.' Thus, before President Roosevelt, French patriots invented the 'temporary expedient'.

<sup>2</sup> I remember some bitter remarks in *Gringoire*: 'unfortunately I have not kept them', telling how the police in charge of watching General Giraud were given less powerful cars and with less petrol than those that were granted to the man they had to shadow.

Dubreuil — Rigault and acting as their intermediary with Metropolitan France was summoned one day to Darlan's study in Vichy. Coldly, without any beating about the bush, the Admiral said to him: 'I know why you are here. I know what your job is and what contacts you have made. I want you to say from me to those who sent you that I am disposed to be the man they are seeking.'

The thunderstruck messenger transmitted this astonishing offer to Algiers and Mr. Robert Murphy was informed.

Darlan, finding himself pressed by the turn of events, tried even more direct approaches. He empowered Colonel C. director of the Deuxième Bureau at Algiers to present his proposals to the representative of the State Department. Since the Admiral had come out into the open, Mr. Robert Murphy also went straight to the point. He agreed to a meeting with the Admiral's spokesman.

Henri d'Astier de la Vigerie was entrusted with the arrangements for the interview. It took place in October. D'Astier had placed at the disposal of the American diplomat and the Admiral's plenipotentiary a villa at Guyotville near Algiers, which had been rented by the conspirators as a prison for persons who might be troublesome on the night of the landings.

Colonel C. showed his hand: the Admiral was aware of the Allies' plans. Through his secret police, he knew about the American deal with General Giraud. The Admiral considered, indeed, that Germany was beaten and that American intervention alone could save France. His patriotism went so far that he was ready to offer the support of his name and his position to Mr. Robert Murphy when the landing took place.

The Admiral would shortly make a tour of Africa, where, as opportunities arose, he would make the necessary contacts with those preparing the operation. From this it emerged clearly that Darlan, although he had discovered the preparations for the operation, in no way suspected their imminence. He obviously thought he had three or four months before him in which to organize his change of policy by some theatrical manoeuvre, the occasion for which would be given him by fresh German demands.

The interview at Guyotville ended without any decision, or at least any apparent one, being reached. Soon afterwards, Mr. Robert Murphy

informed Rigault and d'Astier that he had turned down the Admiral's offer.

It is difficult to know to what extent Giraud, Weygand, Darlan and the United States Representatives at Vichy kept Marshal Pétain informed of events, while the possibility of American action was becoming more and more acute. He knew of the plan to fall back to the Massif Central. He suspected a possible American landing, but he, too, did not believe it to be so near at hand. When, in February 1942, A. R. Métral, returning to France from an economic mission in Washington, where he represented the Vichy Government, told the old Marshal of the American plan for exploiting North Africa, the latter showed no signs of surprise. He answered calmly: 'Let them only not be too hasty, let them not be too hasty, else they will make a mess of it!'<sup>1</sup>

It is surprising to realize how well the secret of the African enterprise was kept, or rather to appreciate how cleverly the American and British organizers grasped the fact that, as indiscretions could not be prevented, they must at least be properly canalized. In France, all those who knew, or thought they knew, were convinced in the same way as Darlan that the landing operation would not take place before the following February.

And when, in October 1942, the atmosphere grew tense, it was too significant to be spontaneous. Once again, opinion was being guided by gossip, its wildest guesses were being fed. And in what a radically wrong direction! Out of the blue rose the 'menace on Dakar'. All eyes were turned on Dakar. The newspapers published numerous maps showing the proximity of the Brazilian coast! American landings in Liberia and in Gambia were the focus of attention, the Anglo-Saxon press giving them the semi-publicity they deserved. All these symptoms almost amounted to a certainty in the view of French public opinion, and what was the most astonishing result of this campaign was that Vichy military circles — and even those of the Axis — were completely taken in. Those in the know — still hypnotized by the date of February — imagined that there would be a double operation, beginning with a preliminary bridge-head in French West Africa. Everybody considered as perfectly reasonable the hurriedly organized transfer by Admiral Darlan of the best French troops in North Africa to Dakar in West Africa, Dakar being in

<sup>1</sup> When, on the morning of November 8th, the news of the landing was announced to the Marshal, he answered à la MacMahon: 'I dreamt of it last night!'

fact the only point not attacked by the Allies. . . . This gives one food for thought . . .<sup>1</sup>

On October 20th a small paragraph in the French press informed the public that Admiral Darlan had gone to Algiers where his son was seriously ill. This was true.<sup>2</sup> But on the 21st, the Vichy propaganda machine suddenly released the information that the Admiral had continued his journey as far as Dakar where he was inspecting the defences of the Empire. This inspection acquired a highly spectacular appearance. At each stage of his journey on the way back to Algiers, the Commander-in-Chief received and sent off official telegrams. Congratulations, compliments, mutual reassurances were exchanged. Vichy breathed again: anyhow the Empire was well defended! There was a bitter humour in this last tour of a commercial traveller going over to a rival firm and wishing to take his clients with him.

On the 23rd, the Admiral was in Rabat. He had a long, extremely long interview with Nogues, a man of the same calibre as himself. One will never know whether these two schemers exchanged their 'forebodings'. If they did, they must have carefully weighed the few elements of the problem which were theirs. And the distressing question must have arisen: on which side will Force be, Force which once more would be synonymous with Right!

At a reception by the Sultan, Darlan spoke of Nogues in warm terms as 'one of my personal friends'. And the two men marched through the streets of Casablanca, the crowd cheering them and naively shouting: 'Vive la Paix, Long live Peace.' Yet, before leaving Moroccan soil, Darlan ostentatiously saw General Vogel and General Vaca Maglioni, presidents of the Axis Armistice Commissions. He stopped at Oran to salute in theatrical fashion the dead of Mers-el-Kebir and finally reached Algiers and his son's bedside. His son was off the danger list and the Admiral was fortunately able to give his time to a series of talks with official personalities. He even found time to have a private meeting with Mr. Robert Murphy. The American diplomat has never mentioned what

<sup>1</sup> The Swedish Telegraphic Agency, controlled by the Germans, sententiously explained, on October 26th, 1942, that this transfer of the best North African troops was directly connected with the 8th Army offensive, because 'if this offensive was successful, it would be followed at once by an Anglo-American attack on Dakar'.

<sup>2</sup> Alain Darlan was struck down by an attack of infantile paralysis on coming out of an official dinner in Tunis. His lower limbs were completely paralysed.

took place during this conversation, but already on the next day gossip was repeating a carefully worded indiscretion. The Admiral was said to have remarked: 'If you come here, come in great strength. . .'

On the 30th, Darlan saw his faithful Fenard yet once more and flew to Vichy.

But although a month previously he had been miles from guessing how near was the hour for action, he seemed to realize its present imminence, for he flew off alone. Madame Darlan remained in Algeria. His chief of staff, Admiral Battet, also stayed behind. So did his confidential agent, the head of his police, capitaine de frégate Hourcade. I am merely stating facts, without comment. . .

When he arrived in Vichy, he immediately had 'a short and friendly interview with the Marshal'.<sup>1</sup> Then he was present, an unusual occurrence, at a Cabinet meeting specially convened. He read an optimistic report almost entirely devoted to the defence of Dakar. The report on his tour of inspection ended, Laval rose and took the floor, to 'thank him and congratulate him on the results of his journey'. For the scene to be quite perfect, only an accompaniment of Offenbach music was lacking. After the meeting, people flocked round him and inquired as to whether his son was out of danger?

'Definitely out of danger,' stated the Admiral in front of twenty witnesses.

Darlan's afternoon was crowded. He was received by Laval, and had a 'long and cordial interview during which the steps taken to ward off any aggression were enumerated with more precision.'<sup>2</sup> More precision? The historian might be permitted to have doubts!

After which the Commander-in-Chief, not wanting to do things by halves, granted an interview to a special correspondent of the *Pariser Zeitung*. I have just re-read it: again it dealt only with the Allied preparations at Brazzaville, in Liberia, at Bathurst. This German newspaper added: 'Regarding this, Admiral Darlan's visit is particularly significant. The value of the forces which are available over there becomes apparent.' And it proceeded to praise the strength of the Dakar defences, the tonnage, the armour plating, the armament of the fleet which was there, the strength of reinforcements improvised in order that the town might be sheltered from a land attack. Incredible though it

<sup>1</sup> *Petit Parisien* of October 31st, (G. C. Veran).

<sup>2</sup> *Petit Parisien* of October 31st.



might seem, the families of the Dakar and Saint-Louis military men were sent to North Africa for safety. It was like a dream . . .

Yet I remember the Algerian atmosphere during those last days of October and during the first week of November. Everybody was whispering that 'the date was approaching'. And it was without doubt to be action at Algiers, not in West Africa nor even in Morocco. The bluff held good only in France, in Berlin and in Rome.

What did Admiral Darlan do during the four days following on his return? He spent hours alone in his office, carefully, punctiliously filing papers, archives. When, fifteen days later, Laval had his place searched, only cinders and burnt-out documents were discovered<sup>1</sup> in addition to seventeen uniforms, colossal quantities of hams, tinned foods, potatoes, 500 pounds of coffee, 800 pounds of sugar. Marion, Vichy's Minister of Information, revealed these unsavoury facts to the Parisian press. . .

On the evening of November 4th, the Admiral received a telegram from Algiers calling him to his son's bedside. This telegram was neither signed by the doctors nor by Madame Darlan but by Fenard.<sup>2</sup> On the 5th, discreetly, the Commander-in-Chief left the Vichy aerodrome, abandoning his mother-country at a time when European tension was almost at its maximum. Vice-Admiral Battet, his chief of staff, as I have already said, was also absent and for a very good reason! The polymyelitis of Darlan's son deprived the Armistice army of its two chiefs three days before the landing.

The Admiral's departure took place without a word being breathed. A fortnight earlier, a communiqué was given to the press stating the reason for the first journey: this time it was not mentioned in any newspaper. The secret was universally kept<sup>3</sup> and one even wonders to what

<sup>1</sup> Officers in the immediate circle of the Admiral have told me that the final burning of compromising documents was achieved in the days following on the landing, by capitaine de corvette X. Darlan's aide-de-camp, who had remained behind in Vichy.

<sup>2</sup> I will often quote the name of Admiral Fenard who played a dominant part in all these events. In 1941 and 1942, when he was staying in Algiers, he received at his house all the important personalities who passed through the town and regularly gave dinners to the American consuls. In their presence Madame Fenard who was violently pro-British and even Gaullist, expressed corresponding views openly. The Admiral said nothing, shook his head and made no comments on these animated declarations. Later, from all sides, we shall find him in the centre of everything, of all negotiations, of all incidents. Admiral Fenard holds the key to the Darlan mystery.

<sup>3</sup> It was so well kept that the official German news agency D N B wrote, on November 11th 'Immediately after the declaration of hostilities, Darlan left for Algiers in order to take over command of the French troops'. Better still, on December 4th, that is almost a month

extent the Marshal's ministers knew that the Commander-in-Chief had returned to Algiers five days after he had left it. The news was released like a bombshell on November 8th in most of the official circles in Vichy.

In Algiers, too, the incognito was strictly maintained. Not a word was mentioned in the papers. Not a single indication even in those circles which were 'in the know' or rather who flattered themselves that they were. Yet either on the 6th or 7th, I am not quite certain, one of the voluntary drivers of the North African ambulance service, on guard at the Maillot Hospital where young Darlan lay, told me that she had seen in the passage the characteristic silhouette of the Admiral, accompanied by his wife. At that time the rumour seemed unlikely to be true: he had left his son but a few days previously and the latter's state of health, though extremely grave, did not appear to have taken a turn for the worse between October 31st and November 4th.

Darlan was in constant touch with General Alphonse Juin, Commander-in-Chief for North Africa, during the days he spent in Algiers. It was at his house that Darlan was taken prisoner during the night of the 7th to 8th. On the 6th, however, and this is disconcerting, General Juin sent a note to his subordinate, Vice-Admiral Derrien, commanding the sector of Bizerta, informing him that he feared an Anglo-Saxon landing at Bizerta and at Bone: 'Two British officers, landed from a submarine, have been taken prisoner in the region of Algiers.'

Therefore, on the 6th, General Juin had sufficient evidence to believe in a landing and to warn officially the commanders of the sectors. But the Admiral, who was sharing his house, remained shut up with his chief of staff, and did not even consider it necessary to inform the Cabinet of the anxiety felt by the North African command. The Cabinet had not yet recovered from the state of bliss produced by Dakar and only emerged from its initial mistake to become even more completely confused. Temperature rose in Vichy during those first November days. The vast concentration of ships at Gibraltar reported by signal from the German consul's observatory at La Linea to Nazi press agencies<sup>1</sup> caused much alarm.

<sup>1</sup> Precautionary measures were advised: on the 6th, the commander of the Oran navy was given strict injunctions to bottle up the port preventively if he judged this to be necessary. (This was done.) On the 7th, the Tunisian fleet was advised to take the line of 'threat'. But it was admitted by those who gave these orders that it was only a measure of precaution.

later, Radio-Vichy was still telling its listeners: 'Darlan asked to be sent to Algiers on November 8th.' Why this false version of events which could by then only take in the general public?

However, in government circles, forty-eight hours before it actually took place, the idea of a landing on the coast of North Africa still seemed an improbability. By a strange paradox, people were still so obsessed by the Dakar coup that they were almost relieved to learn, from the same source, that the Anglo-Saxon armada had left Gibraltar heading towards the Mediterranean and not towards the Atlantic. General opinion had it that the convoy, though admittedly of unusual size, was on its way to supply Malta and would force its way through the Straits of Sicily. At the worst, it might be for an operation on Sicily or on Sardinia.

I do not speak here of public opinion but of political and military circles. On the 7th, General Bergeret, Secretary of State for Air, accompanied by the capitaine de vaisseau Lemonnier<sup>1</sup> and his ordnance officer, Commandant de France<sup>2</sup> left Vichy by air en route for Bizerta. He was going 'to watch the aero-naval operations which this enforced passage through the Straits of Sicily would provoke'.

How could we do otherwise but understand that the French Admiralty, the general headquarters, all Vichy believed in this version when the Italian Government made it known, on November 6th, that 'in full agreement with Germany, imperative circumstances might require that measures be taken in the Central Mediterranean to limit the zones for commercial traffic'. In this same official note, the Italian Government guaranteed in its name and in the name of the Reich that French commercial traffic would be maintained and that its safety would be assured through their combined efforts.

So, during these final days of Anglo-Saxon preparations, it was the Axis which helped, in an unhoped for manner, the interests of the United Nations and immobilized Laval and his Ministers in their illusions that the coming storm would break over their neighbour's field.

It is scarcely possible to understand how and why it was that no one in Vichy, during those hectic hours when the French navy was in a state of permanent alarm, was perturbed about the absence of Admiral Darlan, the person most involved in the coming events both as a sailor and as Commander-in-Chief.

Vichy learnt about the landing in the early hours of November 8th.

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Lemonnier was chief of staff of the French Navy in 1944.

<sup>2</sup> Commandant de France was attached to the Darlan cabinet the day after the landing.

At first the disturbing news filtered through, bit by bit, in incomplete form, through the American and British wireless stations and a few pieces of direct yet local information from North Africa. At six o'clock, Radio-Vichy gave out the news, the plain unvarnished truth.

At that moment, so it was said at the Hôtel du Parc, the situation seemed to be 'confused in Algiers, but resistance is strongly organized at Casablanca and at Oran'.

At nine o'clock, Mr. Pinckney Tuck, United States chargé d'affaires, was received by Marshal Pétain. He read him a message from President Roosevelt, informing him of the occupation of Morocco and of Algeria. The old Marshal put on his spectacles and read out in his turn a text prepared in advance, in which he said that he had given orders to resist. When he had finished, so an eye witness said, he looked straight at Mr. Pinckney Tuck, in all friendliness, then turned away abruptly and went off whistling.

The first step taken was to call a meeting of the Cabinet which had three separate sittings during the day. The second step was to summon General Weygand urgently to Vichy.

During the first Cabinet meeting, the Ministers heard with amazement that Admiral Darlan was in Algiers. A cable sent by the Admiral to Marshal Pétain, as soon as he had been released from prison and had reached Fort Lempereur, was read out to them.<sup>1</sup> He informed the Marshal that he had taken over command of the troops which were resisting, but he did not breathe a word about his short imprisonment, nor of his interview at night with Mr. Robert Murphy.

He immediately received, by way of reply, the following personal telegram from Pétain: 'I have received your messages and am glad you are on the spot. You are thus able to act and gather information. You know you have my whole-hearted confidence.'

At the close of the Cabinet meeting, a communiqué to the country was issued:

<sup>1</sup> This official cable was certainly duplicated by a coded message sent by Darlan to his aide-de-camp, Capitaine de corvette X. who passed it on to Pétain. One should note the formula, 'Your messages', in the Marshal's answer. During those days, the Admiral remained in constant touch with his aide-de-camp, by cable, using a code of which not even the Admiralty had the key. He gave him continuous instructions and kept on asking anxiously for news on the 'political situation', as we can gather from those messages which X. showed to a few friends. What was being said? How were people reacting? What were they thinking? Such was Darlan's ever-present worry. Capitaine de corvette X. alone amongst the immediate entourage of the Admiral was arrested during that month.

We ask the people of France not to be deluded into believing what certain foreign stations give out. The Government will keep you informed of everything which takes place. The Marshal's reply to President Roosevelt clearly shows wherein everybody's duty lies. Discipline, calm and unity are required. Admiral Darlan is on the spot. . . .

At midday, Darlan sent another cable: 'Both General Juin and I myself are in a desperate situation and are liable to be taken prisoner.' 'Prisoner' the word struck a military chord in the old Marshal.

While all this was going on, at 2.45 on that Sunday afternoon, Weygand arrived in Vichy. In the Marshal's mind, there was no doubt but that the former Commander-in-Chief would take over from Darlan, who himself admitted that he was in a 'desperate situation'.

A dramatic interview then occurred between Pétain, Weygand and Laval. Two opposing winds blew in a tragic whirlwind around Pétain. Weygand, before anything else, demanded the immediate application of the 'Darlan plan' as a precautionary measure. At last the patriot in him was alive again. The possibility of German troops entering into the non-occupied zone must be foreseen, at all costs the departure of the Fleet must be kept covered, what could be saved must be saved. He spoke to the Marshal as a soldier and impressed him: the plan was there, ready, only the will was now required!

Laval showed total opposition. Next day he was to leave for Munich and meet Hitler there. Such anti-German measures, together with the desertions in Africa, would make his journey impossible and Franco-German military co-operation which he had elaborated before it had even been outlined, would be doomed.

The struggle was violent. When the interview ended, nothing had been settled.

At 4.30 that afternoon, a press conference was held in the Hôtel du Parc. The journalists, eager for news, were told that 'the news is so contradictory that it is not possible to form an exact picture of the situation'. But, it was added, 'one thing is certain, General Giraud is not in North Africa'.

Another cable from the Admiral arrived late in the night of November 8th to 9th. Several hours after having forced Juin to sign the truce in

Algiers, after having had two interviews with Mr. Robert Murphy, he telegraphed in discreet terms that, 'he was contemplating the possible opening of negotiations with the American authorities'.

All night he anxiously awaited a reply to this first advance. He would have been satisfied with the slenderest of indications, with the faintest tacit approval. Weygand spent part of the night with Pétain: the two men had almost all the elements of the situation before them.<sup>1</sup> Everything seemed to prove that Pétain accepted in principle the launching of the security scheme. But time had to be gained. On November 9th, at 8.19, an answer was sent to Darlan's request: 'Under no conditions can negotiations be considered.'

At 10.56, the Admiral replied, cautiously making a break: 'My idea is not so much to negotiate as to observe and take into account. I am watching how the situation will develop. I will report to the Government.'

With these two official telegrams in his pocket, Admiral Darlan went to the Hôtel Saint-Georges,<sup>2</sup> not only to negotiate an armistice, but also to sketch out with General Clark those famous Darlan-Clark agreements which for months were to govern Franco-American relations. That was what he called 'to observe and take into account'.

One can quite easily understand that the Admiral wished at all costs to maintain the constitutional link which bound him to the Marshal and from which he drew all his power. Whatever happened, he had to gain time, hoping to place before Vichy the *fait accompli*. He succeeded. In the general confusion, Vichy was to trust him till the 14th.

Before ending this chapter, here are two more facts directly connected with these historical November days: when Laval left Vichy on the morning of the 9th, he was desperately afraid that the Marshal might give way to Weygand's objurgations—Weygand, whom he had not succeeded in put-

<sup>1</sup> At 11 o'clock that night, a message, unconfirmed, told them that General Juin had signed a truce.

<sup>2</sup> He had yet another message in his pocket, which he sent at midday to Admiral Derrien and which the latter received that afternoon. On the morning of the 9th, Admiral Esteva had received an envoy of the German Marshal Kesselring, telling him that German 'planes were going to use Tunisian aerodromes. Esteva informed Admiral Derrien who transmitted the news to Darlan with details of the commotion caused by this. Darlan's telegram which, according to the admission of the Bizerta Admiralty, 'legalized the situation', was as follows: 'To Comar Bizerta for the Resident-General, the Superior Commander, the Naval Commander, the Air Force Commander: the Americans having been the first to invade the soil of Africa are our enemies and we must fight them, alone or with outside help.' Having thus exposed the Americans to the blows of Tunisian armies and having opened the protectorate to the Axis, the Admiral, his conscience at peace, went to negotiate with Mr. Robert Murphy.

ting out of harm's way.<sup>1</sup> But it was too late for him to take action himself.

He, therefore, warned Benoist-Mechin as he passed through Paris and left things in his hands. Benoist-Mechin immediately got into touch with General von Stulpnagel and revealed to him the Darlan plan which Weygand wanted to have put into force. The German warned Berlin. One of the first results of these events, curiously enough, was to put Abetz out of favour.<sup>2</sup> He was recalled to Berlin to justify his deficiency.

But Weygand had to be eliminated. Already, in Vichy, there was a persistent rumour that he was to take command of the African army. Soon afterwards the consequences of Benoist-Mechin's action made themselves felt. An order from German headquarters reached M. Krug von Nida, German consul at Vichy: Weygand was a most undesirable person to have in Vichy and must be removed forthwith.

The soundest American sources, in fact those of diplomats then on the spot, state that as soon as Weygand heard of this threatening communication, he took a decision and left for Africa.

There is no actual proof of this, though it seems likely. It is a fact that when the General left Vichy in the Marshal's own car, driven by one of his personal chauffeurs, he did not go towards his estate in the South of France. He was going to see some friends in the Creuse, was what he vaguely told people. He was accompanied by his son, Commandant Weygand and his daughter-in-law, Mme Jacques Weygand. He was twenty-four hours too late. German troops had just entered the non-occupied territory; they had hemmed Vichy in. The car was stopped before it reached Gannat by a body of German soldiers armed with machine-guns. Weygand protested against this arrest in the free zone. It was contrary to the formal promises given by Marshal von Rundstedt to Marshal Pétain: the policing of that region was to remain in French hands.

That was no obstacle. The Germans summoned French policemen who obeyed ignominiously and executed the arrest.

<sup>1</sup> On December 13th, Laval declared to some journalists: 'Supervision does not exist; only arrests count.' Then, talking of Giraud: 'I did not want to have Giraud arrested; I regret it.'

<sup>2</sup> This was a small revenge on the part of Benoist-Mechin and Doriot. Mechin had received certain documents which gave proof that negotiations were taking place between the U.S. consulate in Casablanca and several French Generals, amongst whom was General Bethouard. He communicated these to Doriot who passed them on to Abetz. The Reich Ambassador did not take this seriously and did not even bother to inform Berlin. Doriot hurriedly spread the news in German military circles in Paris, the day after the landing, boasting that he had warned Germany of American intentions.

## ADMIRAL DARLAN

General Weygand, his son and daughter-in-law were driven to Moulins, surrounded by German motor-cyclists. There, in the occupied zone, they were officially taken prisoner by the German authorities.

They remained seventy-two hours in custody, whilst judgment was pronounced on them in Hitler's personal headquarters. When the orders arrived, Commandant Weygand and his wife were released but the General was taken to Germany.

Vichy knew nothing of their fate for forty-eight hours. When the truth was learnt, Pétain could do nothing for his 1940 associate. He left him to his plight, and thus, once and for all, definitely abdicated and gave up any pretence at resistance. That same evening the papers were formally informed that no mention must be made of General Weygand's arrest.

The quadrille was over. In Algiers, General Giraud was to take over Weygand's office; in the prison at Koenigstein Weygand replaced Giraud. Darlan had changed partners and Juin, freed by the Germans on the demand of Weygand, took up arms once more to free his liberator.



## TEMPORARY EXPEDIENT

*Aucune police n'a jamais pu défendre longtemps un être assassiné déjà dans des milliers de coeurs*

FRANÇOIS MAURIAC

THUS on November 9th, in Algiers, the situation remained hopelessly confused. All day British ships had been arriving in the port. All the docks, all the basins were filling up, boats were berthed at all the quays. This port, almost dead for the past two years, where units such as the *Ville d'Oran* and the *Champollion* had been transformed into floating hotels, suddenly, in the space of a few hours, came back to life. Troops, lorries, artillery, and food littered the wharfs. It was mild, the air was light, an opaque sun hid behind the clouds. Crowds gathered on the slopes. Comments were unbiased: people awaited the Luftwaffe with the calm conviction that the bombs meant for the actors would be harmless to the spectators. But for some unknown reason the Luftwaffe had disappeared from the sky.

The newspapers gave little news except to mention that fighting was continuing in Morocco, at Oran. And those who, the night before, under the blissful influence of drink, were so friendly with the 'liberators', were completely fogged and began to awake to a sense of guilt. In official circles, they were almost as badly off.<sup>1</sup> For twenty-eight months people had been taught to think 'according to a pattern', and one cannot completely forget this in twenty-four hours, no matter how exciting these hours might be.

All the more so as the first proclamation to be published in the papers requested officials to remain at their posts and ended with the cry of 'Vive le Maréchal'.

Life from a material point of view was not simple either. Restaurants in the town now resembled station refreshment rooms, customers stand-

<sup>1</sup> A subordinate of the Prefet of Constantine, passing through Algiers, telephoned to ask for instructions: 'But, Sir, which is the enemy?' He got this magnificent reply: 'Who the enemy is, is a matter for the army. It does not concern civilians.'

ing in every corner, eyeing greedily those who were seated and had nearly finished their meal.

The town was trying to find its own balance, without a leader, without any line of conduct to follow.

When Admiral Darlan went to see Mr. Murphy in the afternoon, their respective positions were no clearer. The Admiral, who had recovered a kind of pseudo-liberty, continued to play his double game, as we have seen from his morning telegrams. He was to send another one that evening, asking for severe sanctions against the 'dissident' generals and in particular against General Bethouard.<sup>1</sup> He tried by every means available to get into touch with General Nogues and so get a wider grasp of the situation with a view to following eventually the same line.<sup>2</sup>

At the moment of coming to terms, Darlan was once more filled with misgivings lest he should back the wrong horse.

Mr. Robert Murphy — still waiting in vain for General Giraud to arrive and having been told of the difficulties which had arisen in Gibraltar between the French leader and the American Headquarters — began seriously to consider the possibility of using Darlan more extensively than had been intended at first.

Above all, it had become imperative to end the fight. The truce in Algiers was purely localized; in Morocco and Algeria, there was still some sniping here and there. This guerrilla warfare threatened to become permanent if a central authority did not give a formal order to lay down arms.

But other and more far-reaching prospects emerged. Would it not be wise to reconsider Darlan's proposal to collaborate if he had enough authority to obtain the cessation of hostilities and if he managed to throw a mantle of legality round his name? His past, heavily mortgaged, would be the best pledge of his docility and, if the local opinion could accept

<sup>1</sup> Vichy replied to this by denationalizing Generals Bethouard, Mast and de Montvabert. General Bethouard was taken prisoner while trying to arrest Nogues, and only just escaped a firing squad. During one of the three Cabinet meetings held in Vichy on the 8th, Admiral Platon had suggested that he be shot without a trial. And, before the Meknes Court Martial where he was hurriedly tried, it was by a hair's breadth that he escaped a death sentence.

<sup>2</sup> When, at last, he got in touch with Nogues on the telephone, he found him hedging and evading the question, for Nogues did not want to commit himself any more than did the Admiral. A farcical scene followed: 'Nothing', said Nogues, 'proves your identity. How can I tell that it is not an American officer on the line?' The irony was heavy. Darlan then asked him to come to Algiers, but received no definite promise. Nogues hastened to come only after he had realized that the Admiral's position was solid.

the idea of a renegade as master, the United States representative would be ill-advised to be more intolerant than the French themselves

Yet all through that day, Mr Robert Murphy was taking a great personal risk in following the policy he had improvised. He had neither the consent nor even the acquiescence of General Eisenhower. Moreover, when the Commander-in-Chief learnt, just before leaving Gibraltar — whence he had directed operations — that Mr Murphy was negotiating with the Admiral, he stated very vigorously, in front of several French and American witnesses

'I will not have it! I will put a stop to it!'

And it was in this state of mind that he arrived in Algiers on the Tuesday morning <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Everything confirmed General Eisenhower's fundamental opposition to the 'temporary expedient' as a solution. Although during his four days in Gibraltar, he had had unexpected and very serious talks with General Giraud, on arrival in Algiers he still energetically opposed Darlan's nomination. On the 10th, while the Admiral was signing the truce in his capacity of Commander-in-Chief, with Eisenhower's own chief subordinate, General Clark as co-signatory, Eisenhower hurriedly called a meeting of Anglo-Saxon war correspondents as soon as he got out of the 'plane'. Collingwood, MacVane, Stoneman, all of whom he had met many times in London, were there. He read out to them a special communique which I will reproduce and which represents a truly historical document. General Eisenhower unable to alter the course of events and officially show his disapproval of Mr Murphy's movements wished at least to establish clearly that he had had no part in them and that, up to the time when he was placed in front of the *fait accompli*, he had been faithful to the agreements signed with General Giraud and to the promises given him. Here is the communique.

General Henri Giraud has arrived in Algeria, coming from France. His presence here will, we hope, bring about the end of a sporadic resistance of so distressing a nature to soldiers fighting the same enemy.

General Giraud has taken command of the French movement which has as its aim to prevent an Axis aggression in North Africa so as to be able to resume the fight by the side of the Allied forces for the defeat of Germany and Italy and the liberation of France and her Empire.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces is willing to uphold General Giraud on the fields of operation with important forces under his command. The United States Government has undertaken to supply arms and material to this new French army.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces is glad to welcome this distinguished French officer as an Ally in the common cause.

Of course this gave rise to a rush of questions because the correspondents knew that Mr Murphy was negotiating with Darlan. Eisenhower firmly replied 'Yes, General Giraud will be responsible for civilian as well as military matters'. And he added 'I have had talks with General Giraud. We have reached complete understanding and are working hand in hand. He can count on my entire support'. Pushed yet closer to the wall, the Commander-in-Chief went so far as to say 'He will certainly establish some sort of French Government in North Africa. He will be in command of the army and the Government will be given the task of organizing this army in its fight against the Axis'.

Such were General Eisenhower's declarations. He refused to know of Mr Murphy's dealings with Admiral Darlan. Yet, subsequently, the official version of events was to hold Eisenhower responsible for the Darlan expedient, and to excuse it as a 'military necessity' <sup>1</sup>

So Mr. Robert Murphy had to act very carefully indeed. What was said during the twin conversations Darlan-Murphy and Darlan-Clark on November 9th has not been disclosed. Even if no agreement had been signed, it seemed as though Admiral Darlan had formally undertaken to put an end to hostilities and that he was well aware that his prestige in the eyes of the Americans depended entirely on the obedience of the troops to his orders. More than ever did Vichy's support for another forty-eight hours become essential.

It seems that during the evening of the 9th, he telephoned his A.D.C. and was informed of the way the wind was blowing in Vichy, but no official record of this call has been found.

It is, however, certain that, early next day, he sent a cable to the 'Cabinet' suggesting a plan of negotiation and asking for 'an immediate reply'. It was a clever move. He knew that Pierre Laval was in Munich, that it would take hours to refer the matter to him and that the Cabinet, in the absence of its head, could take no major decision.

But the Admiral was covered. Desperately he maintained the fiction of the Marshal's delegation to him of power — now only holding by a thread — in order to put in front of Pétain the accomplished fact with due decorum while he still held legal authority.

A queer race for time began during the morning of the 10th. Would Darlan sign the armistice before receiving a telegram forbidding him to do so, before being officially deprived of his power by Pétain? Would he sign it before Giraud's arrival, the latter having at last left Gibraltar?<sup>1</sup>

He was in a tight corner, but his reasoning was correct: Vichy had not had the required time to reply when it received a second cable: 'He has decided to come to terms and has given the order to cease fire'!

*And he actually did issue the order, before midday on the 10th, a bare half-hour before the Marshal relieved him of his command.*

It was indeed at half-past twelve that Pétain proclaimed that 'in the absence of Admiral Darlan, he was taking over personally the command of air, sea and land forces' — at the precise moment when the second cable

<sup>1</sup> His fear of seeing Giraud replace him inspired him with an overwhelming argument. In his first telegram to Vichy, on the 10th, he pleaded that if he was willing, as Commander-in-Chief, to negotiate with the Americans, it was in order to 'prevent the felonious and rebellious leader, General Giraud, usurping the command of the troops'. Pétain himself, filled with the comic fury of the duped, gave out this sentence on November 16th: 'It only needed five days to see Darlan, reassured, give over in person the command of the troops to that 'felonious and rebellious leader'!

from Darlan reached him and he understood that he had been tricked.<sup>1</sup>

After this, the situation became even more equivocal and it is probable that Vichy largely contributed to it. According to all official statements, the order to cease fire was given by the Admiral on November 11th. Everything corroborates this; the Algerian newspapers only printed this order on the 12th.

The manœuvre was obvious: if this order to cease hostilities was only given on the 11th, it was given by a man who no longer represented the Vichy government. In retrospect, the importance of the date as far as the Americans were concerned becomes clear. At that time, they still considered the Marshal and his men as representing the legal government of France, and it was to them that they accredited diplomatic representatives. But facts bear witness: the armistice was in fact signed by Darlan before the Marshal had deprived him of his authority. It was on November 10th, at midday, that Rear-Admiral Battet had the following message sent personally to Generals Juin, Nogues, Barré, Mendigal, and to Vice-Admirals Michelier, Moreau and Derrien:

Our agreements having been fulfilled and fighting becoming unnecessary:

<sup>1</sup> The communiqué was published in Vichy that afternoon, after a Cabinet Meeting presided over by Pétain who had called together his Ministers, Weygand and — unbelievable as this might seem — Pierre Laval's representatives, René de Chambrun (his son-in-law) and Jacques Guérard. Nothing could be decided without them whilst Laval was away.

What should be the answer to Darlan? That question was asked during the meeting Weygand asserted — it was becoming a habit — that resistance was hopeless. Gibrat, back from Africa, agreed and told of the enthusiastic welcome accorded to the Americans. Admiral Auphand spoke on the same lines. One must give in. . . .

After much hesitation, Pétain finally pronounced with a sigh: 'I submit to your point of view, gentlemen.'

Chambrun burst out: 'You have no right, Monsieur le Maréchal, to stab in the back the Head of the Government whilst he is negotiating for the return of twelve thousand prisoners and endeavouring to maintain the integrity of national territory!'

Guérard and Marion continued the challenge. The latter exclaimed: 'It must never be possible for people to blame you, Monsieur le Maréchal, for our prisoners not being released and for our definitely losing Alsace and Lorraine!'

To clinch matters, Guérard hastily scribbled the draft of a telegram: 'I gave the order to defend yourselves against the aggressor. I keep to that order.'

Uneasy, then resigned, Pétain meekly gave his signature. The telegram was forthwith sent to the Admiral.

At the same time Pétain vested his powers in General Nogues in North Africa, Nogues who had been sending frantic messages saying that Darlan was taken prisoner. He was only informed during the evening of this transfer of power to him by the Marshal 'for the prolongation of the battle'. By that time all was finished: the truce had been signed everywhere, and signed in the name of the Marshal!

## TEMPORARY EXPEDIENT

- 1 Order is hereby given to all land, sea and air forces in North Africa to cease fighting against the American troops and their Allies immediately they receive this order and they are to return to their bases observing the strictest neutrality
2. In Algeria and in Morocco, the Commanders-in-Chief should get into touch with the local American command regarding the clauses concerning the cessation of hostilities
3. In the name of the Marshal, I take upon myself the command of French North Africa. Present military leaders will retain their command as will also the political and administrative structure, no change must be effected until I so order
4. Prisoners taken on either side will be exchanged

Signed François Darlan.

Everywhere the recipients of the order noted the time and obeyed, Michelier first at Casablanca. In Bizerta, Admiral Derrien, his suspicions aroused, asked Rear-Admiral Battet, formerly under his command, to recall on the telephone a few facts out of his past life in order to verify the authenticity of the order. Battet complied with the request and Derrien, reassured, undertook to have the notification sent to his superior officer, General Barré, by his chief of staff.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> During that same afternoon, Rear-Admiral Battet told the naval commanders in Bone, in Bougie and in Philippeville that American troops would land that same evening and must not encounter any opposition. This message was transmitted to Bizerta through Bone. Had the Americans dared, on that evening of the 10th, to go as far as Bizerta instead of landing in the three Algerian ports only, they would have been greeted in the same spirit of welcoming neutrality. During the 11th, Admiral Derrien ordered a strict neutrality towards all belligerents. This attitude was confirmed by a message from Admiral Auphand, Minister of Marine in Vichy, at 4 o'clock on the 11th, ordering 'complete passivity towards everything'. After taking note of this telegram, Admiral Derrien was called on the 'phone by Admiral Esteva, Resident-General, who passed the receiver to General Barre, Commander-in-Chief for Tunisia. Barre ordered 'force to be used to prevent an Axis landing'. At 4.22 on the 11th, Admiral Derrien gave out the following orders to commanding officers:

1 To oppose by force all landings by the Axis powers, to open fire on any Axis ship nearing the shores

2 No hostile move against troops, ships or 'planes of American forces or their Allies to be attempted

3 To observe until further order an attitude of neutrality towards Axis 'planes unless they should indulge in hostile acts

Until 12.30 that night, the time at which a message from the Vichy Government arrived, ordering resistance against the 'Anglo-Saxon aggressors', Tunisia was open to the Americans. They could have landed in the port of Bizerta without firing a single shot. Not till 11 o'clock on November 12th did the first German 'plane land in Tunisia. On the evening of the 13th, five full days after the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon landing in Africa, there were only two

So the armistice was signed, and signed by Admiral Darlan. The game upon which he had launched was beginning well, and he had scored one point. But he, who was still the Dauphin of the Marshal, must act quickly. He had to avert three dangers: General Eisenhower's opposition, General Giraud's arrival and the repudiation by Vichy which would soon come. Was it in order to gain a few more hours of credit with the Pétain Government that he once more committed perjury and sent a cable, his last cable, asserting that 'he had passed the order to cease fire and was putting himself in the hands of the Americans'? Now each hour gained was in itself a minor victory for him. . . .

Yet once more events were to bring him prodigious help. General Giraud, whom he feared so much, refused to accept the powers offered to him by the Americans which were not what he had hoped for. For a few days he disappeared to a suburban villa. Darlan solved the Giraud problem in a trice. He boldly named him Commander-in-Chief of the North African Forces and thus bound him hand and foot. The General accepted, from the Admiral, that command which the Allies had been offering him in vain since November 6th. It was true that Darlan was still sheltering behind the shadow of the old Marshal.

This inconsistency on the part of General Giraud made the loyal Eisenhower's position intolerable. He was placed before a highly satisfactory position for the United States: the fighting had come to an end and General Mark Clark was about to sign agreements amounting virtually to an American 'diktat'. He was not obliged to know the price paid for such gifts, and the only man who could at the time have reminded him of his word, of the signatures he had given, remained silent and claimed nothing.

It was the invaluable Fenard, Grey Eminence to the end, who was to introduce Admiral Darlan to General Eisenhower. An American witness told me that the General was ushered into a small room in which a number of French officers were talking at the top of their voices, gesticulating.

'This is not headquarters', Eisenhower is said to have murmured, 'it is a mad house.'

At that moment a door opened to let in a short square-built man, in

---

thousand men of the German army, with no heavy equipment other than thirty medium-sized tanks and a few 88 mm. guns on Tunisian soil. A little more daring, a few thousand more men, and there would have been no Tunisian campaign.

mufti, and the excited group instantaneously stood routed to the spot in a stiff salute. Silence had so quickly descended on the parrot-house that the General was much impressed. He was to fall later under the spell of 'this little blue-eyed man' as he called him, and he admitted as much several times during the following weeks. In any case, his opposition previously so violently proclaimed definitely disappeared after this first meeting.

Events in Vichy also favoured the Admiral. Right up to the very end, this man built his career on France's misfortune. It was providential for him that Axis troops should have invaded, at dawn on November 11th, the non-occupied zone in France. Laval was still in Munich and the Cabinet had not yet met under his presidency. When it did so meet, at six o'clock that evening and again on the 12th, and issued the proclamation that 'the Marshal has personally taken over the command of the armed forces. His orders alone are valid,' it was no longer a sovereign government, though it kept up the pretence carefully, obstinately maintaining its seat in the non-occupied zone.<sup>1</sup> When reading the complete account of both Cabinet meetings, one notices that Darlan's name is not once mentioned.

In all the directives sent during the night of the 11th to the 12th, both to Morocco and Tunisia, there is also no word of condemnation regarding Darlan's action. Either Vichy still knew nothing of the armistice signed thirty hours earlier — which seems unlikely — or else it pretended to be ignorant, and accepted the story that Darlan was a prisoner and that the fight was continuing.

Darlan, of course, drew great profit from these documents, together with the protest which the old Marshal had dared to make during Laval's absence against the violation of the clauses of the armistice.

The Admiral pleaded his cause: 'All these documents issued by men who can no longer express themselves freely show approval of my action. The Marshal and his ministers had formally invested me with their confidence

<sup>1</sup> It was stated, in this communiqué, that the Marshal and the Government had decided 'that in accepting from foreign hands the command of French elements in North Africa, General Giraud had broken his word, betrayed his honour and failed in his duty as an officer. So neither the troops, the civilians, nor the civil servants need any more obey him'. In point of fact, on the 11th, General Giraud had accepted nothing.

And then what need we say of a Government which condemned a general for submitting to foreign ascendancy whilst German sentinels guarded the door of the building where it sat, and, already on the 11th, the privileges of the diplomatic bag and code to its representatives abroad had been forbidden, except under German control!



when they were still free. They renewed their pledge of confidence again on the 9th. To-day they denounce Giraud, who is nothing, Mast, Bethouard and Montsabert who play no political part, so as to satisfy German demands in a spectacular fashion.'

In actual fact, Darlan could have said later that the armistice signed by him was one of the last justifiable constitutional acts of Vichy!

But, during all this primary phase, he had no need to refer to the fact that the Marshal 'was a prisoner', nor that he was interpreting the Marshal's 'secret thoughts', in order to rule. In the eyes of the public, there was no doubt whatsoever that he was the Marshal's trustee.

During this confused period, the Admiral acted with an ability which had a spark of genius in it. One cannot help admiring this man, kept in leading-strings by the Americans for a week — and held tightly because they had good reason to be distrustful — yet who succeeded, each time his masters relaxed the lead, in starting some manoeuvre and manoeuvring so well that he came out of it triumphant.

On the 12th, four days after the landing, he was virtually enthroned by Mr. Robert Murphy. He had overcome General Eisenhower's opposition, made General Giraud play a vanishing trick and managed not to be yet disowned by Vichy whom he was cynically betraying.

He gave orders to the Generals and Admirals in power — and was obeyed. Nogues hastened to come from Rabat in order to hand over the powers conferred on him by the Marshal.

Truly, his triumph seemed to all intents and purposes complete.

Yet this power was fragile and illusory as can be judged by the appeal he sent out on the night of the 12th to the 13th to the Toulon Fleet urging it to rally to Africa. How much stronger would his 'hand' be with such a trump card!

But, even in the Admiralty circle, there was little belief in the success of this message. All day long the men in the Admiral's background giped at him ruthlessly. The lieutenant de vaisseau X. spread merciless stories throughout the town.

'Do you know the difference', he asked me, 'between Darlan and Esteva? No? Well, Esteva is the Admiral who has never been in love and Darlan the Admiral who has never been to sea.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In French there is a pun in this saying: 'Esteva est l'Amiral qui n'a jamais connu l'amour, Darlan l'Amiral qui n'a jamais connu la mer!'

In the turmoil that ensued at the very moment when Darlan came to power, he was confronted with general and manifest contempt.<sup>1</sup> His pedestal of mud threatened to crash to the ground at any moment.

He still used the Marshal's name, but seventy-two hours later Pétain placed him 'outside the national community'.

Murphy and Eisenhower still backed him up, it is true, but a few days later Washington spoke strongly and harshly of this 'temporary expedient'. Nogues placed himself under his command yet never for a single day ceased sending messengers to Laval through Tangier. His underlings in Tunisia soon escaped his control owing to the simultaneous arrival in Tunis of Admiral Platon and Axis troops.

It may seem paradoxical but Giraud alone, who had so many reasons for complaint as regards the Admiral but whose profound honesty was the best guarantee, could be considered as absolutely reliable once having accepted the military command.

It was on such precarious ground that, on the 13th, in a joint declaration of Darlan, Nogues and Chatel (who had just returned through the 'back door') the Admiral 'took over the responsibility for French interests in Africa, with the consent of the American authorities'.<sup>2</sup>

Now he had to do his job in double quick time. He signed the famous agreements with General Clark which were to govern Franco-American relations in North Africa. The terms of these agreements were never published. Owing to the excessive zeal of a repentant man who feels he has much to be forgiven, they allowed the United States privileges incompatible with French sovereignty. Thus North Africa was to be divided into several military areas. If any riots should occur in one of these areas, it could immediately be isolated, removed from French administrative power and placed under the orders of an American officer. But the definition of the word 'riots' was arbitrary. If the American High Command had wished to take advantage of the power given it by Darlan — which it never did — it could have placed an American General at the head of the Oran district, or of Casablanca,

<sup>1</sup> This contempt in North Africa turned into hatred in all other French circles. For once 'collaborators' in Paris and 'Gaullists' in London agreed on a point. The same words were used to stigmatise the Admiral. André Suarez (*Aujourd'hui*, November 17th) and François Quilici (*La Marseillaise*, November 24th) both dubbed him the 'Fregoli among traitors'.

(Fregoli was once famous, as an actor, for the speed with which he could alter his disguise.)

<sup>2</sup> In Nogues' proclamation he says that the Admiral 'has now recovered complete freedom'. He had, therefore, lost it once. The people of Algiers learnt this with amazement.

- following on a mere quarrel between an American soldier and a native.

Furthermore, American and British troops enjoyed the privilege of extra-territoriality in all places which they occupied. French authorities were deprived of the right to visit ships in the ports occupied by the Allies; they no longer had control of arrivals and departures from the airfields.

Nevertheless, Darlan did insert a restrictive sentence which later on General Giraud and even the French Committee of National Liberation were to quote not without effect. This sentence said that 'French sovereignty would be respected whenever circumstances permitted'.<sup>1</sup>

We are far from the preliminary agreements of Cherchell in which it was arranged that the 'Americans undertook to respect French sovereignty scrupulously'.

The general public ignored these facts. These events which will be well remembered in French history did not for a moment penetrate the consciousness of the people of Algiers, who entered into the war profoundly bored and resenting the invasion of their restaurants and their increased difficulties in obtaining supplies of food. All shows were suspended, no trams circulated after half-past six at night, curfew was at eight and dinner had to be started at six o'clock, if not at five-thirty.

Algiers was a sinister, awe-stricken town. Allied groups zigzagged about, arm-in-arm, through the moonlit streets, singing with drunken obstinacy the song 'Roll out the barrel' introduced by the Royal Navy.

Everybody turned spy. Radio-Algiers gave out a notice issued by military authorities promising two thousand francs reward for 'any enemy captured alive' and fifteen hundred francs for an enemy's dead body. The story is well known of the German spy who one day went about in the uniform of a British lieutenant, and the next arrived in that of a French captain. A militia man noticed him and judged his promotion too rapid. He was shot at Hussein Dey.

But it took bombing really to stir up the people of Algiers. On the evening of the 12th the first barrage balloons sent up by the ships rose in the sky, harbingers of the Luftwaffe which came in the night and again on the following day at dusk. Let me quote from my diary:

<sup>1</sup> This short sentence enabled General Giraud, when Tunisia was liberated, to prevent similar conditions being applied. Admiral Muselier quoted it again in Algiers in order to re-establish the rights of French naval authorities over ships entering and leaving the port.

This evening the first serious bombing of Algiers took place. It was seven o'clock. From the building where I was I could see the port up to Cap Matifou. Great flames rose in the east. It must be the Maison Blanche aerodrome which was on fire. Only five minutes later the siren sounded through the town. The alert lasted an hour. I was pushed into a shelter, with no chance to argue, by a domineering 'chef d'ilot' full of his own importance.

The sight was not a pleasant one. Fear was written on every face. From the tunnel, our inexperienced cars could not distinguish between bombs and A.A. fire. The Algerians, never overburdened with courage, were already seeing their town in ruins and ashes. Panic reached its height when a dozen newcomers arrived like a whirlwind, covered in dust, immediately after a nearby explosion. They announced that Rue d'Isly was completely destroyed. A British soldier entered, swaying, into the shelter; he collapsed on the ground. People rushed to dress his wounds. But he was simply, totally drunk. His drunken serenity made the others feel ashamed of their panic.

When we came out, disgusted for all time with humanity in general and in particular with that part of humanity to be found in shelters, we noticed that there was little damage on the whole. A few houses demolished, that was all. But as the explosions had broken all the windows and twisted the iron shutters in front of the shops, the more courageous Algerians, those who recovered first from their panic, plundered systematically and shamelessly the shops struck by disaster.

Raids followed one on top of the other all through the week. We lived in a state of daily alerts at seven o'clock in the evening. By the time a raid was over, the restaurants had closed. I overheard this conversation in the street:

'How's that', asked a policeman returning home, 'don't those fellows ever eat?'

'Well', replied another, patriotically, 'I expect they've got nothing to eat at home, the poor devils!'

The atmosphere in the town was one of tragedy mixed with buffoonery. People could not find their balance, they were ready for any bombastic

exploit but evaded discipline at every opportunity: British patrols exasperated by this Mediterranean irresponsibility had to resort to firing a few revolver shots at the windows in order to make it clear that black-out was a serious matter.

Only material events could impress this North African population. The historical import of these days did not touch them. Probably during the dark days of 1789, some of the people in Paris were also more pre-occupied with the food question than with anything else. And yet Paris 'made' the revolution. Algiers was only 'bearing up' to the war.

But, in the same way as Paris did not shun the spectacle of the guillotine, neither did Algiers avoid any show offered to it. I was present, by chance, at the departure of the Italian officers of the Armistice commission:

They were fifteen, maybe twenty, buttoned up tight in their grey-green uniforms with duck-blue velvet collars. They had pinned on all their medals. Erect, with never a glance to right or left, they walked out of the Hôtel d'Angleterre, got into the cars which were to drive them to the port.

The crowd standing around, having just realized what it was all about, broke through the barriers and ran along shrieking. This same crowd which, the night before, had been sweating with fear in the shelters, greeted with a huge elemental clamour of hate these vanquished men who had remained vain and aggressive. They shook their fists, threw newspapers rolled into balls at the well-greased heads of the 'macaroni' men. As by a miracle, in this central street of the town, hands trembling with fury suddenly discovered stones. The British and Americans uneasily protected their prisoners who, livid, tense, covered with spit, set off to their exile. . . .<sup>1</sup>

In the midst of all this chaos, there were two dangers threatening Algiers: order and disorder. The Admiral personified the first and endeavoured to impose it. He deliberately intended to reign legally. In fact legality was essential to him because the officers, even those most in favour of the Allied cause, still felt bound by the pledge they had sworn to the Marshal. And the equivocal situation could no longer be maintained: Pétain had disowned Darlan.

<sup>1</sup> My diary, November 14th, 1942.

It was, however, necessary on the eve of mobilization, that the army should march!

I learnt on November 14th, through a member of Darlan's Deuxième Bureau, that a report had been handed to him that very day. This report was definite: the army would not follow

In Darlan's fertile brain a new idea sprang forth: he would prove to the French that remaining faithful to the pledge given to the Marshal could best be proved by obedience to the successor appointed by him by a constitutional act issued when he was still free.<sup>1</sup> For the time being, the old Marshal was unable to govern. He had no more wish to do so and had ceded his powers to Laval, thus proving that he deemed himself a prisoner. Darlan, to whom he had once and for all pledged his confidence, remained the sole interpreter of the feelings of the Chief of the State.

So was born the legend of the secret thoughts of the Marshal.<sup>2</sup> After two years of Vichyst propaganda, the critical faculties of the average Frenchman were so obliterated that no one drew attention to the fact that if Pétain had really considered himself a prisoner, he could easily have resigned.

But Darlan heaped more coals on the fire: he wanted to play the demagogue for the benefit of the American nation 'I know better than anyone',

<sup>1</sup> This constitutional act foresaw that Admiral Darlan would become rightful successor to the Marshal, as Chief of State, not only should the latter die, but in case of any other paralysing emergency. It is easy to see the use that can be made from so ambiguous a formula.

<sup>2</sup> I cannot resist the temptation to give a sample of the administrative mysticism which prevailed at that time in military circles. I mean the General Order No. 31, a confidential one, directed to the officers of Moroccan regiments. This order was given out from the Rabat Résidence on November 21st. 'Doubtless some loyal and scrupulous officers, NCO's and soldiers, remembering their pledge to the Marshal will be distressed by the appeal launched this morning on the wireless by our honoured old leader

To them, I, their leader, say

No longer is the Marshal free, he is at grips with an enemy who forced him, by threatening him with dreadful reprisals on the prisoners and on France, to make the worst possible declarations, which in his heart he disowns.

Confident that we now know his inner thoughts, the Marshal will no longer hesitate to accept any attitude, make any move, pronounce any word likely to lighten the suffering of France.

He will disown us, he will condemn us. Let us not forget that machiavellism is an old rule of international politics.

This game will no doubt be deeply distasteful to our Leader, whose conscience is clarity itself, but he will sacrifice his feelings and his hopes on the shrine of France.

Following his example, let us acknowledge these sacrifices. If the trial seems heavy, let us think of him whose sufferings are worse than ours. Let us boldly take the path which leads to the liberation of France and of the Marshal.

Decidedly, ridicule does not kill, not even soldiers.

he said, 'the Marshal's friendly feelings towards the United States.' By an unfortunate coincidence, at the same time (November 21st) that the Admiral was uttering this speech on the Radio-Algiers wireless, the 'friendly feelings' of the Marshal were revealing themselves on the air from Radio-Vichy where he was personally recommending that the 'invaders' blood be made to flow.

It would, of course, be absurd not to consider the Darlan version as a plausible theory, that is that the old Marshal, first gagged by his entourage, then persuaded by it, should, nevertheless, have had an impulse to revolt, at least inwardly. Nor is the idea of making the best of a bad job and of submitting to the 'American invasion' at the least possible cost to be excluded either. What a superb feat to have the National Revolution backed by the Allies! After all, this National Revolution was only an old idea which had now found arms to fight for it, whether the arms be German or American.

That was what was said in the 'Service Order' to the base commanders in Morocco which affirmed that 'it was in the interests of France that she should have, after the final victory, other representatives to the Anglo-Saxons than the entourage of General de Gaulle consisting of former politicians who had nearly brought France to her ruin'.

To the very day of his death, the Admiral relied desperately on a sponsorship which was refused to him.<sup>1</sup> In a series of angry proclamations, Pétain brutally condemned his ex-dauphin. He made him forfeit all his public and military functions. He declared him outside the national community. 'Unworthy leader', 'traitorous leader', 'tarred with the brush of treason', such were the charming epithets with which he studded his speeches. Darlan replied accordingly, calling him 'the living incarnation of "la Patrie" '.

Eight days before his death, he declared to the representative of the Associated Press in Algiers that he had acted as the man who was to take the Marshal's place in case of emergency.

And in an interview, published the day before he was assassinated, he declared in so many words: 'I am merely looking after French interests in

<sup>1</sup> On December 28th, three days after the Admiral's death, Pétain solemnly declared: 'On the strength of his former Government post, Admiral Darlan succeeded, in spite of my repeated denials, in being credited with legal power. As to General Giraud, the position is not even equivocal.' This recognizes implicitly that Darlan managed to maintain his legal title to the very end.

North Africa, in the name of Marshal Pétain, prisoner in the hands of the Germans.'

Right up to the end, his orders were given 'by virtue of the powers conferred on him by the Marshal of France, Chief of the State'.

So, until an accident during the execution of his duties put an end to Admiral Darlan's career, Mr. Robert Murphy contributed to the prolongation of Vichy in North Africa.

This attitude of the Admiral's, purely masochistic, bore fruit. After endless negotiations between Governor Boisson and the faithful Fenard, General Bergeret, who had left for Dakar on November 14th, succeeded, through invoking the name of the old man of Vichy, in obtaining the rallying of French West Africa. On November 23rd, Darlan announced this, in the following manner: 'French West Africa places itself of its own free will under my orders, considering that in that way it remains faithful to its pledge to the Marshal.'<sup>1</sup>

It was more than a rally, it was a victory. True, Boisson was to remain, more than ever, the absolute dictator in his African empire. The Admiral only obtained from him a vague promise of such allegiance as this feudal lord of the twentieth century would give to a remote sovereign. And when Boisson landed in Algiers, in a grey suit and white gaiters, he immediately proceeded to seal treaties concerning the port of Dakar directly with Mr. Robert Murphy and General Eisenhower. Darlan, who knew his men, had given the Governor of French West Africa the necessary guarantees. Four days before Boisson's adhesion, broadcasting to the inhabitants of French Africa, he had said: 'Those whom the Marshal has placed in responsible posts will continue, on an autonomous basis, the direction and administration of those territories in their charge, taking into consideration their situation, their special interests and the legitimate hopes of the population.' It was of the lowest type of electoral bidding.

But this rallying of French West Africa enabled the Admiral to reinforce yet more the network of legality which he so needed. No sooner had the Algerian press spread this news across the eight columns of their front pages, in huge letters, than the High Commissioner — this was the new title he had given himself, with the consent of the Americans

<sup>1</sup> In concluding this speech, Admiral Darlan spoke of 'the eminent General Giraud' and of 'General Nogues', thus introducing a new hierarchy in the lists of officers of the French Army.



— decided to create out of nothing an Imperial Council, composed in fact of all those who had played a part in his accession to power: Nogues who had quitted, Giraud who had backed out, Bergeret who had given lip service, Boisson who had come to heel and Chatel who was forgiven because of his utter insignificance.

Boisson and Nogues participated in the setting out of the texts which specified that the High Commissioner represented the French State and the Imperial Council the various countries of the Empire.

But this Council was no hasty improvisation. The Admiral had had it in mind for a long time. Ever since he had thought of changing his coat. Ever since he had come into contact in France with elements of the resistance movement, in North Africa with Mr. Robert Murphy. He had foreseen the role he could play should there be an Allied landing, and he had foreseen it down to the smallest details. It was during the summer of 1942, that he spoke to a close friend of this plan, still rather vague in his mind, whilst they walked down one of the avenues in Vichy. This friend, sent to the United States in 1943, on a mission, repeated the conversation.

In Darlan's initial plan, General de Gaulle was to be Vice-President of this Imperial Council, whilst he was President. Right up to the time of his death, the Admiral made repeated overtures to the Leader of Fighting France and the obvious contempt of the latter did not prevent him from urging French unity. In this field, as in many others, Darlan's ideas were excellent, the clearness of his mind perfect, his tactical ability greater, in all probability, than that of all Frenchmen and foreigners who surrounded him.

But he was painted with a tarbrush. He was not in a position to preach this unity, the necessity for which was obvious, still less to be the one to bring it about. Even had he been given the chance to redeem himself at that moment, his innate duplicity, his incredible inclination towards machiavellism would have prevented him from coming out into the open.

One can understand that he used the Marshal as a guardian angel, as a sort of friendly Deity of the French people, essential for their morale: but he used him cynically, merely for the purpose of reinstating the Empire in the war at the side of the Allies without undue friction. But as for those Allies, he was ready to betray them as well at the first opportunity. Against whom, against what was he taking measures, if not

against them, when, in agreement with Nogues who still remained constantly in touch with France, he sent testimonies to Vichy of his fidelity not only to the Marshal but also to Laval, back from Munich:

At the beginning of December, Olivier de Sardan,<sup>1</sup> former collaborator of Laval's, now director of Tunisian Phosphates, left Rabat for Vichy. He took with him a joint message from Darlan and Nogues which he handed to the Marshal: 'Let the Marshal and the President count on us. We will give back to them, intact, the power which the Americans have been crazy enough to confide to us.'

This was sheer folly. Could they have imagined, for one moment, that such an act would remain secret? In fact, the Americans, or at least some of them in the Psychological Warfare Section, who knew all about Nogues' sundry deals, heard of this double-crossing action fifteen days later.

Yet in spite of grandiloquent declarations and flamboyant decisions things were not going well in Algeria.

The partial mobilization which the High Commissioner had attempted to carry out in order to pacify General Eisenhower was a fiasco. Certain sections of the Chantiers de Jeunesse were called up and there was congestion. Appeals for volunteers for the *Corps Francs d'Afrique* were multiplied, preserving the ambiguity which caused them to be considered as Gaullists. On the other hand at Boghari, at Djelfa, at Bou Saada, at Constantine, officers frequently sent back to their homes men who had answered the official summons. Special calling-up measures were taken for Jews, which meant, on closer examination, that they were to be sent to break stones on the road to Cheragas.

As to the natives, they formed the object of an insidious, sly, effective propaganda, inciting them to refuse to carry arms at the side of the Allies. A thousand voices in the souks, in the cafés, murmured that the Americans unveiled the women, seduced young girls, in short acted as infidels.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Olivier de Sardan was, in Montpellier, one of the préfets régionaux installed by Pucheu. In September 1942 he was replaced by Houteberry.

<sup>2</sup> The American soldiers, however, had been issued with small text-books, crammed with practical hints, such as:

Do not spit when passing before a mosque.

Never unveil a woman. Do not slap her on the back by way of being friendly. It would not be the right thing to do.

If you see two men holding hands, in public, leave them alone; they are not what you might think.

If you are asked why you have come, remember that it is to liberate France.

Although Darlan broadcast once more, addressing himself this time to the Arabs, preaching a Holy War against the Italians, 'cruel oppressors of the Moslem race', although, in flowery style, he promised the good-willed warriors that he would lead and they would follow him and bring 'fire and steel to the peninsula', it was merely a demagogue utterance and had no longer any power over the natives. For Rommel had become for them, in four weeks, a demi-God, warlike, invincible, almost a myth.<sup>1</sup>

This amazing prestige of the German General was proportionate to the activity of the Axis agents who swarmed everywhere. During the whole of December, German and Italian officers of the Armistice commissions who had managed to escape in the turmoil of the first days, walked unmolested through the streets of Algiers. It was a full month after the landing that there was any thought of taking a census of Axis subjects. By this time they had taken flight.

Still more agents were landed by parachute from German 'planes. One day several French spies were seized. They were members of the P.P.F. (Parti Populaire Français) who had come down behind the Allied lines in Tunisia and who mysteriously escaped the firing squad. Finally, ambiguous communiqués helped to spread doubt in the minds of the people.

One day I was given a personal testimony of the rage of the moment, espionage. The day after I had had a talk with M. de Sérigny, director of the *Echo d'Alger*, in which we had discussed one thing and the other — mostly the other, because in Algiers, at that time, conversations did not remain long on such topics as the weather — I learnt that I had a card in the Deuxième Bureau as a double agent.

This was mentioned with a casual air and with a smile. Such was the atmosphere in Algiers; one word which was not a platitude and you became a dangerous suspect. Every movement, even the most innocent, was heavy with hidden motives. No opinion could be genuine.

In this dreadful climate, where everybody was plotting one against another, the sentence heard most often was: 'For whom is he working?' There was no sign of any enthusiasm. Everyone was concealing some-

<sup>1</sup> An epic Arab song sings of 'Rommel, God of the Desert, before whom all must bow, Rommel the conqueror'. It must be remembered that, in Arabic, Rommel means sand. The double-meaning was exploited by the Germans.

thing, ill-will prevailed. One day, in an over-crowded restaurant where I was sitting opposite a second lieutenant in uniform, I heard him, loud and unashamed, telling another boy who greatly resembled him, probably his brother:

'You see, old boy, it isn't as though we hadn't fought before . . . To begin anew after having escaped death by a hair's breadth in the other war, to hell. . . .'

These were the basic themes, the synthesis of all the gossip, of all the rumours heard from people standing in queues in the market; heard so many times every day, that in the end they ceased to revolt me.

'After all', said one, 'Germany would not have absorbed us entirely. France Eternal could not perish, . . . ' Again: 'Who will profit by it all! Instead of Germany, it will be the Allies dividing the spoils. . . . ' And again: 'We were out of the war. Now we are thrown into it again. With what result? My son, Madamc, won the Croix de Guerre in Syria fighting against the British. Now he is in the front line fighting with them. Does it make sense?'

One day John McVane, of the N.B.C., completely confused, asked me why the French Army was showing so little ardour. I believe that the French Army had definitely finished with the war it had lost, with the war of 1939, of Danzig and the Polish Corridor. Thirty months of defeat had closed that passage of arms. And the 1942-43 war, this new war, filled with a meaning the other never had, needed a man other than Darlan to make it popular. Things were bound to change when he vanished from the scene.

Sometimes absurd incidents occurred, incidents strangely reminiscent of 1939, of the naive panic of the 'phoney war'. Because the population had been warned against explosives shaped like fountain-pens which the Germans had used in France, a barracks was one day entirely evacuated because a practical joker had placed a fountain-pen in the middle of the court-yard.

Distrust reigned everywhere — not without reason. The worst Vichy men were still in power, from Governor Chatel and the Préfet Temple down to the lowest of sub-Légionnaires. The Allies trusted them almost to the point of naïveté and it was with good cause that General Catroux exclaimed one day in London: 'I would not feel safe if I had to fight with Admiral Darlan at my back!'

For weeks the 'protected' Mogador Post Office, through which all essential military communications between the Allies passed, was directed by Colonel Merlin, the man Laval had placed there after consulting the German-Italian Armistice commission. The entire staff had been chosen by the Gestapo!

The *monitor* services of the Bois de Boulogne and of Fort de Kouba were also staffed in the same fashion. We can be sure that for six weeks at least not a single word was said either on the telephone or on the wireless between high Allied authorities and headquarters in Morocco and the Tunisian front without being noted down and immediately passed on to elements most hostile to the Allied cause.

The chief engineer of the port of Algiers, the P.P.F. Renault, in charge of the dry dock, never for one moment concealed his pro-German leanings, the immediate result being that British ships going into dry dock remained there ten, fifteen, even twenty days when, in the opinion of experts, they could have been released within seventy-two hours.

The Civil Defence was placed entirely in the hands of General François, whose chief distinction was his having been President of the Legion in Algeria. The General from the first recruited amongst the S.O.L. (Service d'Ordre Légionnaire) and for purposes of 'civil' defence distributed carbines and revolvers to them.

General Valin, prefect of Constantine, under the immediate orders of Laval, was appointed to govern the reconquered Tunisian territory.

There are many examples of such happenings. Each day ten new scandals arose. The P.S.F. and Legion communiqués were still given a good place in the newspapers. A certain Christian Sorensen, president of some P.S.F. Committee, declared quite calmly in a speech reproduced in the Algerian press: 'Hesitation, concealment cannot be allowed. No one has the right to believe that fidelity to the Marshal is not the main concern of all civil and military leaders, who, their honour intact, have placed themselves under Admiral Darlan's orders.' Main concern indeed! Oh! innocent McVane! who asked me why the war was not more popular.

Confronted by such indulgence, the Legion rose up once more. On November 23rd, the propaganda centre installed by it in the 'Marquise de Sévigné' shop, prudently closed since the landing, reopened its show-windows. Only the extreme anti-British caricatures had been removed. Not only was the sale of official photographs of the Marshal impudently

resumed, but also the sale of collaborationist propaganda pamphlets which bore the Vichy stamp, emblems, 'francisques' . . .

In all shops, in all cafés, Pétain still reigned.<sup>1</sup> Occasionally, rather timorously, photographs of Admiral Darlan had been exhibited next to his, but as the simple folk, malicious without realizing it, had a feeling of differences in rank, the Marshal's were shown two metres square, those of the faithful Commissioner were quarter size.

And the first thing which met the eyes of the British troops on landing on Algerian soil were the words: 'Légion — France — Travail — Famille — Patrie', standing in letters fifteen feet high on the white pier of Algiers. This same Vichy slogan was given as subject for an essay to young Claude, son of an officer friend of mine. Subversively, he dealt with the subject in six words: 'Decidedly, I prefer Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité.' The teacher did not insist.

The Gaullists, the twenty-seven communist deputies, all the political internees remained in prison or in camps. One day I took up this question with lieutenant de vaisseau Z., of Admiral Darlan's entourage. He replied in this magnificent fashion:

'What? Free political prisoners? But we surely cannot do that. What about the problem of finding housing accommodation? Where would these unfortunate men find room in Algiers?'

It was only when I reached London that I learnt how widespread was this theory. It had become a kind of official slogan to which the foreign press gave wide publicity without even wincing.

As to racial decrees, they remained in force in spite of General Eisenhower's declarations. The General could not be in two places at once. When new personnel was being sought for by advertisements in the newspapers for official Government departments in Algeria, it was specified that shorthand-typists, secretaries and drivers would have to prove that they were Aryans.

Why do I mention these facts? Because they are the reflection in daily life of a political idea which the American State Department supported. Because they explain the first break in the blind confidence which the French people had at one time shown towards the United States.

<sup>1</sup> The adoration of the Old Man did not die out so soon. In July 1943, in the Officers' Mess at the Naval Circle in Oran, the inevitable portrait was still hanging, with this incredible inscription under it: 'As you cannot be our Leader any more, you will be our God.' Can one still deny the efficiency of Vichy propaganda!

Two serious questions, moreover, were harassing the minds of the population: the question of food supplies and of the Tunisian campaign which was dragging on. On November 15th a notice appeared in the press from the American High Command stating that the troops were not allowed to buy food in the shops; the population had begun to protest, seeing the vegetable stalls stripped, the bakeries with no bread. Nothing but empty shops instead of the Promised Land.

This latent resentment became more acute owing to the fact that the battle for Tunisia had turned into a lingering campaign. The front was almost stationary. And the Algerians who were full of illusions, encouraged by the boasting of the first days, now sang to a different tune.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, the scuttling of the Toulon Fleet was a very serious blow to the remnants of Darlan's prestige. He was betrayed by those very men from whom he could have expected most loyalty. When the dreadful news spread over Algiers, the man-in-the-street, for once, had a strikingly sound judgment. The words 'glory' and 'honour' might well be flaunted under the circumstances, he believed that once and for all it was not the time to be proud. And the details which came in during the following weeks confirmed public opinion.

When the sailors from the submarines *Casabianca*, *Marsouin* and *Glorieux* arrived in Algiers after escaping from Toulon, they could not be prevented from spreading the information that the fleet had had enough fuel to take to sea if the leaders had but given the order, and could have then placed itself under the protection of British squadrons waiting in the open sea.

Already on the 11th, so they said, the fleet could have got under way in six hours, the submarines in half an hour; the ships had enough fuel for ten days. *Strasbourg*, *Algérie*, *Jean de Vienne*, *Marseillaise*, *Galissonière* had plenty of fuel. Several destroyers had made two false starts, being called back at the last minute. Light craft had left the quayside. The base of Palyvestre was ready to supply air protection.

On November 12th and 13th, the ships were only moored by a cable

<sup>1</sup> I remember a huge headline in the *Echo d'Alger* of November 12th: 'The Germans will be thrown back into the sea in Tunisia within six days, declares American High Command.' The censor, who covered himself with ridicule by blocking out speeches of President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill because they were guilty of mentioning General de Gaulle, allowed this inopportune piece of bragging to pass.

and could sail in thirty minutes. The *Commandant Teste* with thirty-five 'planes on board was ready to leave. They said also that the *Ecole Navale* allowed itself to be captured without attempting any resistance. And when they said: 'On November 26th, it was too late to come out, the Germans had laid magnetic mines in the roads', the ready reply came:

'As they were resolved to suicide their ships, the commanders might have been better inspired to blow them up on the mines in attempting to get out, in order to clear the passage for others. At worst, they would have sunk fighting at sea instead of being sunk in the docks.'<sup>1</sup>

During those days, in Algiers, sailors were treated with a certain rancour. They, in their turn, held together, felt almost responsible and made themselves small.

But François Darlan, undaunted, unruffled, settled down to power as though he was going to remain. He legislated, he organized finance and economy in Africa, the 'federal administration', he bestowed decorations, he reviewed troops. He reigned supreme. 'We, Admiral Darlan, by virtue of the power given to us by the Marshal of France, Chief of the French State. . . '

I remember him at a press conference gathered together to hear him speak, to which he had summoned Allied war correspondents.

Once more, I will quote from my notes (December 16th):

The Admiral summoned the press this morning for 11 o'clock, at his house at El Biar. The Villa des Oliviers was the personal residence of General Weygand when he was the delegate of the Vichy Government in Algiers. General Juin succeeded him. When Darlan arrived to see his son who was ill, Juin offered him hospitality. The hospitality has been somewhat prolonged. . . .

It is a large Moorish house, in the centre of a shady garden, on the hillside overlooking Algiers. The windows are small, trellis-worked, made up of small coloured panes. The journalists, introduced into

<sup>1</sup> I heard a very hard and profound judgment spoken on France by a foreigner, Professor William Rappart, national counsellor representing Switzerland at the League of Nations: 'In France', he said to me, 'you have suffered for generations past from an excess of intelligence. Too much Palais Bourbon, not enough strength of character. And suddenly—look at Toulon—you fall into the other extreme: too much courage, not enough intelligence!' Professor Rappart had come to Algiers to receive his Doctor's degree 'honoris causa' from the University, this on November 6th, just before the landing. Curious inspiration. . . .



a dim warm hall, trod on magnificent Tlemcen carpets. A divan, a few poufs of Moroccan leather: the atmosphere was sufficiently reminiscent of Hollywood for everyone to feel at ease. There were about two dozen people present. Darlan came in, in a brown suit, wearing a brown tie.

He is thick-set, stodgy, he has aged. His face has filled out, he has a shifty look. This sad man, stingy with his gestures, has a curious self-control. His face expresses nothing, except perhaps a slight distrust. 'Pokerface,' murmured Collingwood of the C.B.S.

The audience listened attentively, but it was tense, showed no sympathy. Even before the Admiral began to speak, one could feel that the comments would be acid, whatever he might say. Besides, nobody could help remembering that during the past two years, when the Admiral had faced similar audiences, they had been composed of German and Italian journalists.

'Gentlemen, please be seated.'

He read a declaration of which he had sent a copy to General Eisenhower:

'... When France and the French Empire are freed from the yoke, the people of France will decide, freely, the type of government and the national policy they want.'

The Admiral paused after each sentence and an American interpreter, in uniform, translated it. During this time, he kept looking downwards, only occasionally throwing a furtive glance around.

When he spoke of himself, in the third person, he said: 'The High Commissioner.'

'The High Commissioner has already granted complete and entire amnesty to those who have been arrested because of Allied sympathies. Some of these men now hold important posts in the High Commissariat.'

My colleagues smiled. They were thinking that there would be much to say on the choice and the utilization of Rigault, of Saint Hardouin, of Lemaigre-Dubreuil and of d'Astier. They were thinking of 27 deputies still in prison, as well as of thousands of Spanish republicans, Gaullists, soldiers of the Foreign Legion in concentration camps.

Darlan went on speaking. He said that he wanted to relax the

censorship, to adapt it solely 'to the necessities of the war effort and the security of military operations'.

He concluded: 'I have several times said, with vigour, to General Eisenhower that, in persuading North Africa to turn against Germany and Italy, I sought no help or support nor did I have motives of personal ambition. My only aim is to save French Africa, to help in the liberation of France and then to retire into private life.'

And to emphasize his determination, he took out his pipe, filled it and lit it. He sat there, like a solid bourgeois ensconced in his arm-chair and awaited questions.

One of his listeners, having consulted some of his colleagues, presented Darlan with a written list of questions. There were some concerning de Gaulle, the Alexandria Fleet, future relations with Pétain. The answers were ready. Everything went off smoothly.

One of the journalists was more insidious. He produced a poser, very precise and embarrassing:

'Could the Admiral tell us why he collaborated with Germany?'

The Admiral, with a familiar gesture, was drawing squares on a writing pad.

'Collaboration', he said at last, looking up, 'was imposed on me by force.'

And, squarely facing his questioner, he added:

'Yes, the Germans had me by the throat. All my movements, all I said or wrote, everyone I spoke to was closely watched by them. I was constantly surrounded by spies.'<sup>1</sup>

He got up. The conference had come to an end. The correspondents were invited into the next room where sandwiches and wine awaited them. A few hasty mouthfuls were taken. Few comments were passed. The general impression was disastrous.<sup>2</sup>

That December remains in my memory as a troubled, confused month. We were living in an atmosphere both equivocal and feverish, in a rather

<sup>1</sup> This assertion caused an angry reaction in France. Fernand de Brinon, Paul Chack, Philippe Henriot violently attacked Darlan: 'Was it under constraint', wrote de Brinon, 'that you spontaneously wrote to the Germans offering them your advice regarding naval war against England and handing over to them secret British documents in your possession?'

<sup>2</sup> The Admiral strictly forbade the North African press to allude to the conference or to quote any of his statements.

alarming sort of fever in which enthusiasm played no part but in which hatred grew without pause. I should imagine a similar state of mind on the eve of a large popular upheaval. . . .

Clandestine numbers of the Gaullist paper *Combat* became more and more harsh, more and more outspoken.

One morning, at breakfast, the Admiral found a copy of this paper sent to him in a white envelope. It contained but a single dreadful indictment: 'François Darlan, what have you to say in your own defence?'

The Admiral gave instructions. In future his secretary was to sift the post more carefully. But Madame Darlan, who, having first trembled for the health of her son, now trembled for the life of her husband, repeated again her daily reminder: 'You will end by being assassinated!'

The Admiral's secretary told this authentic story in the presence of several people who spread it around. I myself noted it in my diary on November 30th. I was to be reminded of it again around a coffin. . . .

What the Admiral could not prevent was the appearance on all the walls of the town of fly-bills insulting him and praising de Gaulle. A stencil was placed during the night in the windows of the propaganda centre for the Légionnaires: 'Vive Roosevelt, vive la République.'

Without much hope, the High Commissioner took care of his publicity. To ensure a good press, he got Marcel Sauvage to interview him, Marcel Sauvage who had been reported shot by Radio-Paris so blithely on the day after the landing. Sauvage was the editor-in-chief of the weekly *Tam*. He had already interviewed Darlan once before. But that was eleven months earlier, in Vichy, at a time when the Admiral had calmly declared, in the Hôtel du Parc: 'France without her Empire is worth little. But the Empire without France is worth nothing!'

That, like many others, was an opinion which had to be reconsidered when the Mediterranean was to the north instead of to the south. Moreover, Sauvage was much too tactful to remind the Admiral of this unfortunate phrase, nor did he mention any of the other circumstances of the previous interview. 'Since then', he said in guarded fashion, 'hope has changed sides.' Maybe it was not only hope which had changed sides. . . .

This interview was to have a curious destiny, for it appeared in a paper

dated December 26th, the day after the assassination.<sup>1</sup> It was to be a sort of political will and testament and almost a speech for the defence before History:

During my fifteen months as vice-President of the Conseil des Ministres, nothing vital was ceded to the Axis.<sup>2</sup>

The past must needs die each day. Politics are based on reality, not on feeling. Anyone who fights against Germany is not an enemy in my eyes. Time and place will act in consequence, but French unity is essential, and at once. That this unity should centre or not around me is unimportant. My person does not count. But that it should take place, that is the main concern.

There is no question of forming a government here. I am simply looking after French interests in French Africa in the name of the Chief of the State, now a prisoner. As long as the Marshal remains a prisoner, there is not, and cannot be, any real constitution.

I have endeavoured to fulfil the Marshal's plan, conceived in 1940, in case the whole of France should be occupied. French West Africa placed itself at my side because it realized that I was not acting as a dissident.

As to me, concluded the Admiral in melancholy vein, by the time France is free and has chosen the régime she wants, and her political leaders, I will have given an account of myself and will deem my role at an end. . . .

His role was to end much sooner than the Admiral had then anticipated. When, six months later, I re-read the pages of my diary and recalled my memories, my conversations, my own words, I was stupefied by the thought of the number of warning signs which, in those December days, accumulated over the man who was so soon to disappear.

When he flew to Bone, I followed a premonition and carefully noted that he was accompanied by Captain Weiss, that Lieutenant Peison

<sup>1</sup> Here is a rather macabre detail: as *Tam* went to press several days in advance, it post-dated each number, so that the Christmas number came out on the 24th. It was displayed in all the kiosks, in all the shop windows. As headlines on the front page were two huge titles: 'Interview with Darlan' and a Christmas editorial, 'Assassination of the Infant Jesus'. *Tam* was obliged to re-issue the number, changing this unfortunate title.

<sup>2</sup> It was Darlan again who, at Uriage, on his return from Berchtesgaden, sacrificed so lightly Alsace and Lorraine, the Nord, Morocco and Tunisia.

piloted the 'plane, under the command of Commandant Chassin. Inevitably, I had thought of an 'accident' . . .

It was without any surprise that we read in *Combat*, more and more bitter, more and more violent, such sentences as:

Darlan must give way. This comedy has lasted quite long enough. His historic mission is finished, he can no longer serve any useful purpose.

Or again:

Where can this government be found? Who shall we have instead of Darlan, whose days are numbered?

As headline to the front page of the *Voix Marocaine* of December 20th, an ominous sentence from Paul Claudel was reproduced: "There is no greater charity than to kill evildoers."<sup>1</sup>

Formerly that would have been called provocation to murder. We must have been utterly blinded by the incoherence and folly of the time, by the craziness of events which occurred daily, not to understand that this atmosphere, that those words contained in them this inescapable murder: only the immediate facts could touch us. We were too involved in the events, too close to them and our short-sightedness prevented us reaching the obvious conclusion, the mathematical end: the assassination. Who was there to perceive the guillotining of Louis XVI on the day of the Serment du Jeu de Paume in 1789?

Subsequently there were endless discussions, talks about instigation, about the accomplices of the naive instrument of justice, about those whose interests he served. I will discuss all this in the next chapter.

But how can I make clear that all Algiers was an accomplice, that under all our talk there lay the urging to commit this murder, less as a murder in itself, less as a vengeance than as the one and only solution? For one arm which struck there were a hundred potential killers.

Darlan's executioner was more the incarnation of an atmosphere than of an idea. . . .

During his last days, the Admiral made more public appearances than usual. Troopings of the colour succeeded each other. He was seen, biting his lips, in acute irritation, beside General Eisenhower, always

<sup>1</sup> Il n'y a pas de plus grande charité que de tuer les êtres malfaisants.

optimistic and good-humoured, and Admiral Cunningham, the picture of distinguished boredom. He dragged General Giraud in his wake, who could do nought, but . . . It suggested a comparison; a dud cheque provided with an honourable endorsement.

On December 20th, Admiral Darlan, still followed by General Giraud, General Bergeret, Admirals Fenard and Battet, officially visited the Chantiers de Jeunesse at La Robertsau.<sup>1</sup> There was the usual ceremony: the Marseillaise, introductions. Once more Giraud was greeted with enthusiasm, Darlan with the bare minimum of courtesy. The members of the Chantiers, in full gala uniform, green plus fours, cream-coloured shirts, white socks, were Gaullists, royalists, mostly resistants at all events. Their leader was the same Van Hecke who took part at the interviews of Cherchell. At the time Henri d'Astier belonged to their association. Since November 8th, an important monarchic nucleus had formed in their ranks.

With frigid politeness, Van Hecke introduced:

'Doctor Dantet who distinguished himself on November 8th.' Admiral Darlan innocently congratulated the Doctor—who had distinguished himself in rebellion. He congratulated even those who had arrested him.

Speeches followed. Van Hecke pronounced a prophetic sentence, shortly to be fulfilled:

'One day', he said, 'France will be proud of her sons who have been through the Chantiers.'

Everybody applauded. Darlan also. . . .

In the audience, a uniform among other uniforms, a young man with eyes aflame never stopped staring at the Admiral. His sunburnt cheeks were still covered with the down of youth. His whole face showed inner passion which lit it up. His name: Olivier Bonnier de la Chapelle.

<sup>1</sup> A story was being told in Algiers at the time: Darlan and Giraud came out together from the Summer Palace. The crowd shouted 'Vive Giraud! Vive Giraud!' Then came a hush and a small lonely voice was heard: 'Vive Darlan!' General Giraud turned to the High Commissioner: 'You had concealed the fact, mon cher! that you were a ventriloquist. . . .'

## CHAPTER VIII

### ASSASSINATION AND MONARCHIST PLOT

*Der Mohr hat seine Schuldigkeit gethan*

*Der Mohr kann gehen*

SCHILLER

THE winter sun shining over the port lit up the gardens of the Summer Palace, their well-swept paths, the dense foliage of the palm trees, but gave out no warmth.

It was Christmas Eve, a day like any other. In the streets, as usual, British and American soldiers were wandering around. Women were trying, in vain, to find in the shops presents, toys for the children.

It was also a day similar to every other day in the Summer Palace. The same procession of intruders, of job hunters, of applicants and of the inspired few.

On the clock face of the little church near-by, the hands stood at half-past two. A hundred yards away a black Peugeot, 401, detached itself from the lines of cars climbing the Rue Michelet and came to a stop. Having shaken hands with the three men inside the car, a young man got out and quickly slammed the door. The Peugeot waited. . . .

Without looking to right or left, the young man walked into the cool, silent church. When he came out, he turned towards the railings of the annexe of the Summer Palace. He was stopped at the side-gate and led into a small room where he signed a register and filled in a slip:

Name of visitor: Morand.

Wishing to see: Admiral Darlan.

Reason for visit: Personal.

The orderly, recognizing him, said:

'So you did not see him this morning? He is sure to be in shortly. . . .'

The two men, one following the other, entered the hall of the Moorish building in which the High Commissariat had temporarily set up offices. Then the orderly left, leaving the visitor alone in the small low-ceilinged waiting-room. Against the wall stood a couch with a broken spring showing through.

The young man seemed quite self-possessed. On this point all testimonies agree. He was turning over in his mind the plan of the building. He knew by heart the lay-out of the dark, narrow corridor by which the High Commissioner daily reached his office. He had had plenty of time during his fruitless wait that morning to study the topography of the place.

At three o'clock to the minute, the Admiral arrived in the gardens in his car, on time for an appointment. The young man, hearing the car on the gravel below, rushed to the window.

A few seconds went by . . . Then Darlan appeared in the narrow corridor, followed by his orderly, capitaine de frégate Hourcade.

Hourcade stepped back to let his superior officer pass and walked towards his own office. As the Admiral opened the door to his study, he turned, hearing a noise. The young man was just behind him. At point-blank range, he fired two revolver shots. One bullet hit the Admiral in the mouth, the other in the chest.

Darlan tottered and slid limply to the floor against the door which had opened; there he lay on the threshold, a bleeding marionette who was no longer supported by any strings.

The murderer, in a frenzy, moved towards the body. But Commandant Hourcade came rushing to the scene, instinctively stooping to pick up the body of his superior officer. Bonnier de la Chapelle, about to fire again, stepped over Darlan into the Admiral's study. He was cornered, trapped, desperate; to defend himself he aimed at the A.D.C.; a bullet hit Hourcade in the thigh, another in the ear.

The High Commissariat was roused by all these shots. Rear-Admiral Battet, director of the Cabinet, Commandant Dupin de Saint Cyr and an N.C.O. on duty came rushing in from two different directions. Whilst the first tried to assist the victim, Hourcade, though bleeding profusely, held on grimly to the murderer who did not even attempt to resist. He gave up his revolver to the N.C.O., and allowed himself to be led away, completely broken and exhausted, like a limp rag, like the poor youth that he still was.

Not a moment was lost. Admiral Battet, in his own car, helped by the orderlies, carried the inanimate Admiral Darlan to the Maillot Hospital. Doctors and nurses had been warned by telephone. Immediately the Admiral was X-rayed and a bullet was found in the lung. His condition



was very serious. Madame Darlan arrived as the priest was giving the Last Sacraments to the dying man. Extraction of the bullet was attempted though the doctors knew that it could not succeed. The Admiral was dying. He never regained consciousness, recognizing no one.<sup>1</sup>

So died François Darlan, Admiral of the Fleet, Commander-in-Chief of the French Armies, High Commissioner of France — on an operation table in the Maillot Hospital, that same hospital where two months previously he had rushed to the bedside of his son Alam.<sup>2</sup>

I myself learnt of the Admiral's death at the Hôtel de Cornouailles where I happened to be that afternoon, the Hôtel de Cornouailles, requisitioned by the Americans for the offices of the censorship, and of the Psychological Warfare Section, a semi-secret information and propaganda department linked to the Office of War Information.

Press correspondents haunted the place. They came there more for rumours than for facts

On that afternoon of the 24th, it was Guy C. — the same man who 'held' the Police headquarters on the night of the landing — who rushed in, out of breath, and announced.

'Darlan has just been murdered.'

Immediately a great huc and cry arose. Both McVane and Collingwood were to broadcast to the United States at eleven o'clock that night, and they hastened by car to headquarters, to the Hospital, to the Summer Palace, came back to the Hôtel de Cornouailles, picking up snippets of

<sup>1</sup> Stories began to be spread at once. Vichy newspapers, then the Paris, Rome and Berlin press 'revealed' the last words of the Admiral, spoken in the car 'Nothing more can be done for me. England has attained her goal.' There is definite proof showing that the Admiral was already in a state of coma. These last words were invented to support the thesis of all press agencies, French and German alike: they swore that the murderer was but an instrument in the hands of the Intelligence Service. This unofficial version of the facts was given so much credit that the French Ambassador in Ankara, Gaston Bergery, went so far as to say before witnesses 'Darlan was assassinated by the British.'

<sup>2</sup> A few weeks after Darlan's death, capitaine de frégate Dupin de Saint Cyr, member of the Admiral's Military Cabinet and one of his immediate entourage during his last days, said 'It was the kind of end the Admiral would have wished for. The moral crisis through which he was passing during these last weeks after he had realized how great was his unpopularity was a source of constant distress. He courted risks, provoked them, walking unescorted through the most populous parts of the town, where attempts on his life were most probable. He recalled bitterly the dream which was never to come true and which was so dear to him to end his days as senator of the department of Lot-et-Garonne.'

It has also been proved that a police informer had handed in a report stating that an attempt on the Admiral's life was being planned. Darlan had known about this three days before his death, but had disregarded it and had not ordered any supplementary precautions to be taken.

rumours, various accounts and hoaxes here, there and everywhere.<sup>1</sup> I looked on, somewhat ironically, for I guessed what would happen . . . and what did in fact happen. At seven o'clock orders from the Allied headquarters reached the censorship: it was absolutely forbidden to spread the news. Till three o'clock that morning, nothing leaked out and the commentators of Columbia and N.B.C. spoke at length to their thousands of listeners, of Christmas trees, toys, and parties for the troops, when they were actually in possession of one of the best scoops of their career!

If the censorship was strict, it was because there was every reason to fear trouble. American, British and French troops were immediately confined to barracks where they remained at the ready, in case order in the town should have to be enforced. November 8th had taught them a lesson: the strategic points of the town were occupied.

When I tried to leave the Hôtel de Cornouailles, an American soldier stopped me at the muzzle of a sten gun. No one was to leave, no one was to enter. The orders were to shoot without warning at the least infraction.

Ten yards away, in the streets, groups of people were singing as they walked: the town was preparing to dine as happily as possible within the restrictions, unaware that blood had been shed, unaware that official circles were in a state of distraction, unaware of what had taken place almost under their eyes.

Late that evening, the news spread among a few groups of my friends. When I questioned people later, they all told me, without exception, that the automatic reaction on hearing the news had been the same everywhere, a terrible reaction: a toast to the death of the Admiral!

All this time the body lay on the hospital bed. Rear-Admiral Battet was busy getting in touch with official circles: possible difficulties must be foreseen; General Eisenhower and General Giraud, both away inspecting their troops on the Tunisian front had to be recalled immediately. The defence of the town had to be organized, the police strengthened. Material details concerning the funeral had also to be seen to.

Like a stone thrown into a duck pond, the news spread panic and a scene of macabre administrative clownery took place around the corpse.

<sup>1</sup> It was at first rumoured (no one knew where this rumour started) that the killer was a University Professor who had fulfilled a personal vengeance. But, already that evening, well-informed circles knew the precise identity of Bonnier de la Chapelle. I subsequently learnt with astonishment that the name of the murderer was not known in London for three weeks or more. . . .

'Formalities? The funeral? That is not our business', said the military authorities of the Garrison, given first warning. 'The Admiral was High Commissioner. It is a matter for civilians.'

The civil powers, always anxious to 'keep out of it', replied: 'Not at all. The Admiral was Commander-in-Chief. It is a matter for the army. Consult the military.'

For half an hour, on the telephone, the bureaucrats played battledore and shuttlecock, much keener to escape responsibility and so spend a quiet Christmas Eve than to take charge of the abandoned still warm body.

Finally, seeing the obvious ill-will and lack of assistance shown, naval officers of Darlan's entourage, the only ones who remained faithful, decided to leave the body in the hospital for the night. They themselves kept vigil over the Admiral's remains.

It was only on the next day that the body was transferred, almost furtively, to a mortuary chapel, hurriedly erected in the hall of the Central Government. Everything was scamped.

As to the general public, they learnt the news through a proclamation issued by General Bergeret, a model of a tendentious improvisation:

People of North Africa! Admiral Darlan has been stricken down at his post, a victim of those who could not forgive his having responded to the wish of the French people and taken up at the side of the Allies the fight against Germany. Do not fear, we shall outwit our enemies yet.

As Monsieur Prudhomme would have said, the hand of the enemy has a broad back. But if administrative powers feared riots, or at least a reaction in Algiers, the afternoon of December 25th enlightened them.

From my windows in the Rue Berthezene, near the Central Government, I could see the crowd hastening along on its way to the lying-in-state, and forming a respectful procession in front of the catafalque, guarded at each corner by officers of the navy, army, air force and a native officer. It was silent, moved, that same crowd which, only the day before, had been saying that the Admiral was food fit only for dogs.

Maître René Moatti, President in Algeria of the League for the Rights of Man, said to me, contemptuously, when I met him a little later on: 'Give me three agitators and I could collect all the riff-raff of Bab el Oued to spit on the coffin.'

## ASSASSINATION AND MONARCHIST PLOT

And Maître Moatti, wearing the subversive Cross of Lorraine in his buttonhole, thus commented on the assassination of Darlan:

'Say what you like, in spite of the first reaction of joy, we well realize that it settles nothing. Nogues? Giraud? Boisson? There is really only one possible solution: to spread the rumour that the crime was committed by a gang set upon committing several other murders. All the others will follow. There are ten names in the hat: Darlan's was the first to be drawn'.<sup>1</sup>

Next day all the officialdom of Algiers was present at the funeral service, led by General Giraud, General Eisenhower and Mr. Robert Murphy. The Allied troops marched past the coffin which was placed on the marble steps.

A procession, a solemn one this time, walked towards the Summer Palace after the service and then to the nearby Chapelle Sainte-Marie. Then it broke up. Everybody returned to their homes. The Admiral's remains were stealthily removed and it was forbidden to mention his burial place in the newspapers.

Darlan was buried in the Sailors' Cemetery, amongst his men, with only a few people present, at the very moment when Bonnier de la Chapelle was shot down by the firing squad.

For a few days the matter was talked about in Algiers, but on the whole dispassionately and but little. This murder was in the order of things: it did not provoke any comments.

Reaction was much more violent regarding the murderer. The clumsy, mysterious communiqués issued by the High Commissariat did not help to quieten things down, quite the contrary.

What happened during the forty-eight hours which separated the murder from the execution, during those forty-eight hours filled by ceremonies, by speeches and official tears?

When, on December 24th, Bonnier was arrested, he was forthwith led before a police officer, Garinacci, the Commissaire central, who proceeded to question him as to his identity. Olivier Bonnier de la Chapelle was twenty years old, serving his country. His father was a journalist,

• <sup>1</sup> Maître René Moatti added, smiling: 'If I am arrested, you will swear, Madame, that I have just invented the rumour to amuse you.' Five days later, Moatti was, in fact, arrested amongst the twelve Gaullists, under the official charge 'of having conspired against the lives of Mr. Murphy and General Giraud'. But I could not bear witness, for the very good reason that there were no witnesses, nor any official indictment in the whole business.'

contributor of the *Dépêche Algérienne*. His mother was Italian. He was brought up in France, at the Ecole des Roches. He was a royalist.<sup>1</sup>

Then the real questioning began. The Commissaire was faced by a youth, no longer inspired with a savage joy, a youth without any defence and who seemed utterly amazed at being made prisoner after having performed an act of liberation. At that moment he was willing to confess anything.

He spoke very quickly, at length. He gave names.

When Commissaire Garinacci saw this written confession, signed by the young man, he was completely taken aback, then, in a moment of aberration, seized the document and burnt it that same evening.

Bonnier was placed in solitary confinement. A court martial would settle his fate: we were still in a state of siege, as we had been since November 8th.

In his cell, he recovered his calm. His barrister, Maître Sansonnetti, a Gaullist, spent hours with him and asserts that 'he was confident and certain that nothing would befall him'.

His main preoccupation during that evening and the following Christmas morning seems to have been the political situation in North Africa. He asked strange questions:

'Are there no changes? No riots? All is quiet in the town?'

During the day of the 25th, it was the divisional commissaire Esquécyré—one of Henri d'Astier's men on the night of the landing—who questioned the murderer. He got nothing out of him. Except in the first version of his statement (which was burnt) made during the first half-hour, when he was in a highly excitable condition, he insisted that he had acted alone, with no actual accomplices.

The revolver he had used? Yes, some friends had bought it, but they did not know the use to which he intended putting it. So, this 6.35 did not belong to him personally? No, in actual fact, he had borrowed it.

But he would not give the name of the person who had the custody of it, 'for he too had nothing to do with the business'. He was questioned more closely: was it not Sabatier, one of his friends of the *Corps Francs*? He admitted it: the revolver did, in fact, belong to Sabatier who was

<sup>1</sup> When tracing family relationships, it was discovered that Bonnier de la Chapelle and the pro-German writer Drieu la Rochelle were distant cousins.

in the black Peugeot car with two others. But Sabatier was not an accomplice.

The car? No, that too did not belong to him, but he sometimes used it for his own personal use. The driver? Mario Faivre, of the *Corps Francs*.<sup>1</sup>

That was all that he could be forced to say.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, what was the use of these questionings? Bonnier even went so far as to speak of a 'mysterious protector' who would grant him mercy. Questioned further on this, he added nothing.

This emotional lad of twenty assisted without a tremor at the scandalous 'trial' which was hustled through in a few hours. One horrible detail: his coffin was ordered *before the sitting of the court martial*, so that the execution could immediately follow upon the sentence. He remained unmoved throughout, as though the trial was merely a mask to mislead the public, and when, at six o'clock on Christmas Day, the military tribunal of the 19th District having deliberated for a short while brought in a verdict of 'guilty' and condemned him to be executed, he heard the sentence read out without turning a hair.

Bonnier de la Chapelle was still waiting confidently for the outside intervention, that act of a *deus ex machina*, which would save him from this perilous situation.

In the evening his assurance began to flag. Would his 'mysterious friends' who had not yet shown up, really succeed in saving him at the last moment? He spoke of a 'pretence at an execution', but was it not merely to deceive himself?

On the 26th, at the last minute, he seemed to realize that he had been hoodwinked right through. As he must die, abandoned and unaided, he wished to make a full confession. He asked for sheets of paper. The prison chaplain who was in his cell had none.

So Bonnier de la Chapelle wrote his final confession on a visiting card — yet another curious detail in this mysterious affair. Bonnier revealed in a few words the existence of a monarchist plot and the names of those who, in one way or another, had suggested to him the idea of murdering Darlan and so clearing the path for the Pretender to the Throne. In the middle

<sup>1</sup> Mario Faivre and Sabatier had also taken part in the putsch of November 8th.

<sup>2</sup> I wish to state that no one was allowed to hear the trial except the military judges and the lawyer.

of the card was displayed a name: Henri d'Astier de la Vigerie, secretary-general of the police.

This monarchist plot set up in December 1942 is not a flight of fantasy. It really did exist but not in the form one might imagine. The royalists in Algiers never wished for a *coup d'état*, but wanted a legal election. The Comte de Paris, Pretender to the Throne of France, remembered the famous precedent of Napoleon III. His fondest dream was to see himself elected High Commissioner for France by the Imperial Council which Darlan had created.

For those who were not in Algiers at that time, the plan will probably seem fantastic. But it is not to be sneered at. Below the top layer of absurdity, under the fresh polish of the institutions created by Admiral Darlan, it transpired that it was the royalists who had the key of the position, who were behind all the most important doors.

Lemaigre-Dubreuil, civil counsellor to General Giraud, and his special envoy in Washington, was a royalist. His right-hand man, Jean Rigault, who was in the key job of secretary of Political Affairs, with powers over information, the press and the censorship, and a 'hold' on half the town of Algiers because of his files, was also a royalist — out of sheer ambition. So was Henri d'Astier de la Vigerie, this 'grand seigneur' who found himself by mistake in the position of secretary-general of police.

I remember asking Captain X., one day in December:

'What has become of d'Astier, in his new job?'

Captain X., replied, sarcastically:

'Oh, nothing unusual. In the morning he goes to Mass, in the afternoon, he plots.'

There was nothing surprising in the latter. He had done nothing else during the year of adhesion to the Gaullist movement, 'that splendid adventure'. In fact, what else had he done all his life?

Now he was already getting bored with legality. His personal pre-war convictions — I have already said that he contributed regularly to the *Action Française* — the important weapon which he held through his position at police headquarters, compelled this man, a sheer Italian Quattrocento type, to become once more the active champion of a cause he had given up only temporarily.

The Chantiers de Jeunesse and many officers in army circles who had not forgotten the traditions of Lyautey, were also royalists. So,

for their own ends, were the rich settlers, dire enemies of a democratic government.

And General Giraud found himself in the heart of the 'plot'. A man of General Giraud's immediate entourage said to me at the time: 'What a poor set of men surround the General. What an influence his civil Cabinet, his military Cabinet and such people as Rigault or Lemaigre have acquired over him. . . .'

For General Giraud was regarded by the 'dynasty schemers' as the master pawn on their chess-board. If Darlan were to disappear, Giraud, although he had repeatedly declared that he was a soldier and had no intention of interfering in politics, would have a preponderant voice at the Imperial Council. He was not dangerous. He had no ambition. He was honest. General Eisenhower had complete confidence in him. Without much effort he could be the Grand Elector of France. . . .

Almost in broad daylight, right in the centre of Algiers, the conspiracy went on. In the block of flats 'Algeria', on the Télemly road, visitors could be seen arriving day after day, stopping before Mr. J.'s flat and ringing the bell. This flat had become one of the most frequented places in town. A gentle ring:

'Is Monsieur Robin at home?'

If the visitor proved worthy, M. Robin was always in, for he went out but seldom, and then only for a short drive in his car. He occasionally paid a call. He dined often with important people. He dined with Boisson, with Nogues, with Chatel. It definitely did not look like a plot; rather like an Academy Election.

Like everybody else, however, M. Robin was plotting for the benefit of his country. But he had set up a side-show of his own; the country, to him, was the fief of Henri de Guise, Comte de Paris.

Sometimes the visit of Mr. Murphy at the house of the Princesse de Polignac, or the Princesse de Ligne, in the high suburbs of Algiers, coincided with a visit of the Prince.

Everything was so open, so conspicuous, so much spoken of, that nobody was perturbed. And public opinion least of all. Moreover, in that December in Algiers, the need for a permanent authority, whatever its aspect, instead of the 'temporary expedient', was felt most strongly. . . .

It went so far that when Radio-Ankara and Reuter's Agency announced on December 16th that President Lebrun had reached Switzerland ready



to rally to North Africa, a general eddy of opinion could be felt. At last there was a legitimate authority on which to lean!

But it was only a hoax. So people were thrown back on Henri de Guise, people who thought that the Comte de Paris was, after all, like a breath of fresh air after Admiral Darlan.<sup>1</sup>

I have in mind such men as Alfred Poise, secretary of the Treasury, who was not at first a royalist but, through revulsion and reasoning, became one of the most faithful supporters of the Comte de Paris.

These people would have accepted him. But the true followers of the Pretender thought more in terms of a Spanish monarchy than of a British one, after the necessary transitory period of the High Commissariat. They were fanatics, showing devotion to their Prince. What a symptom of the state of confusion in France, this desperate search for a man, an individual, be he Pétain, de Gaulle, the Comte de Paris—and how unlike the true French temperament. . . .

Who was Henri d'Orléans, the man so revered by this handful of fanatics? I had often seen him, in Belgium, before the war; most often on the Haren airfield, near Brussels, where he piloted a small plane of his own. He was a tall young man, slender, with well-groomed hair, slightly dolichoccephalic, always smiling, in short an agreeable person who loved all sport. An Infante of Spain, who happened to be healthy.

He had become very popular with the Brussels police agents who, as a result of having frequently to summon him for exceeding the speed limit, knew well his blue Bugatti.

On the tower of the Stockel castle where the Pretender of France lived, flew the tricolor flag of the Republic. Henri, Comte de Paris, lived there in a peaceful, yet hopeless, exile, surrounded by a few faithful friends.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes young royalists came in a pilgrimage, bringing proof of their platonic fidelity. They departed having stored up a few comforting words and admired the Prince's numerous family, which increased each year as is only befitting a King, anxious for the future of his dynasty.

Occasionally, when in need of news, camera men came from Brussels to take numerous shots of his family gathered on the veranda steps; they

<sup>1</sup> It was the same phenomenon as in Belgium in 1937, when thousands of catholic liberals, all of moderate tendencies, voted for the madman Léon Degrelle, acknowledged candidate to dictatorship, under the pretext that he was a new man and that anything was better than politicians.

<sup>2</sup> His A.D.C. was Colonel de la Rocque's brother.

never failed to comment on the moving and charming simplicity of the setting in which this family of royal stock lived.

A few years before the war, the Comte de Paris published a book of progressive, almost socialistic, ideas, on the principle that socialism had become the only possible policy for a monarch.

In 1938 a small sensation occurred: the Pretender summoned the Parisian press to a castle 'somewhere in France', where he addressed a speech to them and toasted them in champagne. Everybody was amused. When the policeman is made to look a fool, the Frenchman always has a good laugh.

In 1939 he volunteered for the French army. The Government refused the application. He wanted to join the British. Again he met with failure. Under an assumed name he finally entered the Foreign Legion.

Then came June 1940 and the defeat, the demobilization. Henri d'Orléans came to London, saw General de Gaulle but failed to seize the opportunity then open to him and went away again. Up to 1942 he divided his time between his property in Larache (Spanish Morocco) and a villa in Rabat.

Amongst Nogues' entourage were a few men who had sworn fidelity to Henri d'Orléans. Whenever the opportunity arose, they would arrange for him to meet important people or French journalists passing through Morocco. Previous to each interview, the Comte de Paris skilfully got himself documented. The people he met were surprised to find before them a young man who talked fluently and eloquently of the latest lobby gossip with M.P.'s and of the circulation of Paris newspapers with journalists. He won them over especially as they had expected nothing. They departed completely under his charm.

But his innermost, deepest desire remained to return to France. At last he succeeded — staying in Clermont-Ferrand and in Vichy during 1942. He saw Marshal Pétain and those who inspired him, Alibert and Maurras, as well as Dumoulin de la Barthète, General Bridoux, War Minister. He saw everybody. Even Pierre Laval!<sup>1</sup> He certainly saw General Giraud several times.

On his return to Morocco, he invited the American consuls to dinner

<sup>1</sup> Laval is said to have replied to the Comte de Paris who was complaining sometime in August 1942 that his services had not yet been called upon: 'You have waited twelve years, be patient just a little longer, your time will come.'

on several occasions. He learnt from them so little about the plans for the landing (contrary to rumours which spread through Algiers) that he was in Spain in November and had to return in great haste.

During November he settled provisionally in Rabat. He sent an unbelievable letter to Laval, expressing his loyalty to him; Algiers learnt nothing of this.<sup>1</sup>

First in Vichy, then in London, the Comte de Paris tried to make his mark in Algiers.<sup>2</sup> There he made himself conspicuous as I have already said.

Anecdotes about him were being widely told. This one seems to me rather neat and may even be authentic:

General d'Astier de la Vigerie, Henri d'Astier's brother, came to Algiers a few days before Darlan was assassinated, sent officially by General de Gaulle. He went to see the Prince, I should imagine on his own initiative. After a long and searching conversation, the General told the Comte de Paris that he very much doubted if the people of France would ever choose him as their representative, as the symbol of popular wish.

'Your Highness, you may be king in North Africa, but you will never be King of France.'

As the Comte de Paris seemed sadly to agree, his aide-de-camp interrupted impetuously:

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Laval indulged in the malicious satisfaction of reading this letter to some forty journalists during a press conference held at the Hotel du Parc on December 13th, 1942. Here is the description of the scene by one of those present: 'Laval said: "Marion has just reminded me that I have here in my pocket a letter from the Comte de Paris. He is a loyal subject, this Comte de Paris. I will be told that I am compromising myself by having dealings with him, but all the same I will read his letter aloud" . . .'

'Laval, acting his part perfectly, studied the emblazoned sheet of paper he then unfolded "And he has a handsome coat of arms"

'Picot interrupted: "They are the arms of France."

"I know," came the quick reply — and the whole of Laval was shown in the answer — "that is why I like to fondle them."

In this letter, dated November 16th, the Comte de Paris informed the President of the Council of the bewilderment of the French people in North Africa since the 11th. He wrote that 'dissidents' cut off the electric current whilst broadcasts were being relayed so that the Marshal's orders should not be heard. But the latest news from France had informed him that the Marshal had taken over complete command of the forces. Then, soon afterwards, it was Admiral Darlan who gave the order to cease fire.

And the letter ended 'I count on you, Monsieur le Président, to give us reassurances which we can no longer expect from anyone here.'

Laval ended the reading with the comment: 'He will receive an answer.'

Never before had a double-dealer been spotted more deliberately. . .

<sup>2</sup> In a circular sent to royalist groups in France, the Comte de la Rocque de Séverac explained that the Comte de Paris 'played his game loyally and was fulfilling his task of a conciliatory king by going to Algiers'.

'But, Your Highness, your rights, your legitimacy, your throne . . .'  
General d'Astier turned to him, smiling, and said:

'Come now, my friend, do not be more royalist than the King.'

That was how the 'monarchist plot' was presented by popular anecdotes. The assassination of Darlan was to place the conspirators face to face with reality, giving them the opportunity of proving their real existence in those tragic circumstances. But the news of the murder filled them with such panic that they instantly appeared to be exonerated of having personally guided the murderer's hand. While the Prince's entourage was obsessed by one idea alone, the coming election, a few ebullient young men attempted another putsch such as that of November 8th at which they had participated. It was done for a wager, but this time troops took over the telephone exchanges and the wireless station. At the General Post Office the conspirators came straight up against a detachment of American soldiers. Crestfallen, they had no choice but to go home. The monarchist putsch was over. The real conspiracy had started. For, while Darlan was being buried and the unfortunate Bonnier fell, hit by five bullets, unaware that his act had been in vain, some checking up was going on at M. Robin's flat. After a first polling, it seemed that a majority of votes in the Imperial Council was assured, as well as Mr. Robert Murphy's support and the acceptance of the *fait accompli* by the public. What a fatal mistake it had been! For though, as had been expected, General Nogues backed out on December 26th, to the surprise of everyone, General Giraud entered the lists and put his name forward, in an act of civil courage which we cannot underestimate; it cost him a great deal to give up at the time the clear-cut path open to a soldier. He had the strong support of General Eisenhower, faithful to the end to the promises he had made in Gibraltar, and, ultimately, of Mr. Robert Murphy.

The American Republic was definitely not going to make a present of a Restoration to France. Mr. Robert Murphy sent a telegram to President Roosevelt informing him of the proposed election of the Comte de Paris. Upon receipt of a strongly-worded reply from the State Department, the President's minister confessed his scruples to M. Capitant, head of the Gaullist movement 'Combat':

'If the Comte de Paris were elected', he said, 'it would be the beginning of innumerable political complications. I cannot ask American diplomacy to uphold a reactionary line.'

It was high time that this was said.

As to the electors of the Imperial Council, Nogues, Chatel, Boisson, Bergeret, they enthusiastically upheld General Giraud as a candidate and he was unanimously elected. Another irony of fate: it was Jean Rigault, permanent secretary of the Council, who ratified this decision and who hastened, in face of the *fait accompli*, to suppress for a while his royalist convictions.

In this fashion the so-called monarchist plot was lamentably frustrated.<sup>1</sup> The Comte de Paris remained another few days in Algiers, amidst general indifference, then returned to Rabat during the second week of January, after Jean Rigault — before finally dissociating himself from him — had vainly given him his final advice — to offer his services to the Army. Montaigne was right: 'The most bitter, the most difficult task in the world is to carry a King's crown with dignity.'<sup>2</sup>

In Algiers, where the saying was no longer *avoir travaillé pour le roi de Prusse* (to have worked for the King of Prussia, i.e. for nothing) but *avoir travaillé pour le roi de France*, all signs of the plot had vanished.

Still the inquest on the Admiral's death continued; the death of Bonnier de la Chapelle did not hamper the zeal of General Bergeret who was hot on the trail indicated by the murderer two hours before his execution. Slowly, patiently, the net was being closed in on Henri d'Astier, denounced by Bonnier.

Evidence was being gathered. There could never be any definite proof. It was soon discovered that the famous black Peugeot car which had driven Bonnier to the scene of the assassination was a car in which d'Astier de la Vigerie had often travelled, belonging to a friend of his and Bonnier's. It was also discovered that Bonnier had been one of d'Astier's men on November 8th, that he was one of those who had arrested Darlan that

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Boutang, Jean Rigault's chef de cabinet, revealed the mechanism of the plan in this way:

A badly organized, hasty, unprepared action. What should have been done was to await the return to France and then set up the Prince as a candidate to the Presidency of the Republic. Besides, after the war, Belgium, Holland, Greece, Yugoslavia, the Scandinavian countries, Bulgaria, Rumania, Italy will all keep their kings. Monarchy will be restored in Spain and already now Otto of Habsbourg is having discussions in the United States. Monarchy, that is the future of Europe. But through their stupidity this group of scatter-brains have ruined everything.

Pierre Boutang was, of course, a fervent disciple of Maurras. As to Rigault, who did not feel at home in the losers' camp, he turned his coat forthwith. He, too, openly declared that the Comte de Paris had lost his chance because he had wanted to act too hastily.

<sup>2</sup> 'Le plus âpre, le plus difficile métier du monde, c'est de faire dignement le roi.'

night, that the day before the murder he had confessed to that astonishing person the Abbé Cordier,<sup>1</sup> intimate friend of d'Astier's, that he had certainly asked him for absolution in anticipation, having told him of his plans and that the three men had often met together. Moreover, it was the Abbé Cordier who had obtained the false identity card in the name of Morand, which had enabled Bonnier de la Chapelle to enter the High Commissariat.

And finally, there was the fatal visiting card with Henri d'Astier de la Vigerie's name on it and the discovery of the fact that the first confession by Bonnier had been burnt by the Commissaire Garinacci. Why should he have done this if not because that, too, pointed an accusing finger at d'Astier?

To General Bergeret this seemed conclusive proof. On January 10th, Henri d'Astier, the Abbé Cordier and the Commissaire Garinacci were arrested with the approval of their most excellent friend Jean Rigault who lent himself to this double-crossing operation and automatically took over the post of secretary-general left vacant by d'Astier when he was placed on the other side of the prison bars.<sup>2</sup>

The judicial inquiry went on for months, interminably, and in the end the matter was hushed up during the summer of 1943, through lack of proofs.

Such are the facts. Once exposed, the field for theories lies open. And lovers of detective stories had plenty of scope to allow their imagination to run loose in this mysterious matter. Finally, having put aside the more fantastic, the most ludicrous suppositions, be they naive or not, gratuitous or not, what remains? Two main arguments.

I have heard these two contradictory theories developed with equal ardour by people whose position should have qualified them to know the ins and outs of the story. I will add that I think they are both equally of good faith, which does not help the issue, as their conclusions are diametrically opposed.

<sup>1</sup> The Abbé Cordier is perhaps the most extraordinary character in all this story. Lieutenant in the Deuxième Bureau, he learnt one day that one of his Polish agents had betrayed him at Oran. He went to his house, told him he was about to die, confessed him and then strangled him with his scarf; after which the Abbé arranged things to indicate a suicide, hanging the traitor on the hasp of the window.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Rigault, the ever present, was probably more than a mere instrument in this. One of the lawyers connected with the affair who had seen the written evidence, told me that d'Astier could never have been arrested without overwhelming proof against him, handed in by Rigault at the inquest.

The first argument formally accuses d'Astier and asserts that the murder was the result of a plot. The second considers him to be innocent and concludes that it was the individual action of a fanatic.<sup>1</sup>

Here is the first argument, as exposed to me: 'Henri d'Astier formed on a patriotic basis a Youth Movement over which he gradually gained great ascendancy. The adherents were blindly devoted to him, especially after the immense success of the Allied landing of which he appeared to them to be the instigator. His popularity, his prestige were absolute. After November 8th, Henri d'Astier was given the post of secretary to the police. It was one of great authority. His temperament, his vocation urged him to take advantage of this position in favour of an idea from which he never swerved: the restoration of a monarchy. Everything seemed to play into his hand: Darlan being given power was proof enough that there would be no "organic" reaction in North Africa of intolerance towards anybody whatsoever: in spite of his unpopularity, the Admiral remained in his place.'

The time was therefore ripe.

'So Henri d'Astier summoned the Comte de Paris to Algiers. A campaign was started to convince high-placed personalities that the Prince would be as suitable as anybody else for the post of High Commissioner. There are twenty proofs, a hundred testimonies to this activity. Nobody denies it.

'In public speeches, Darlan spoke of retiring into private life. He was approached to see whether he would not participate in the monarchist plans built on his succession. He refused. From that moment his death was merely a question of time.

'It was not difficult to find someone to perform the deed amongst those young fanatics, whose ideal is monarchy. D'Astier nevertheless approached three of them in vain before contacting Bonnier de la Chapelle.<sup>2</sup>

'Bonnier, in common with all those who took part in the putsch of

<sup>1</sup> I do not think that anybody still takes seriously, and especially not those who lived through these events, the wild statement put forth by the Axis which automatically saw in the murder the work of the Intelligence Service, and of the corresponding American services. Nor did the version put forth in Algiers on December 26th by General Bergeret last long. This version said that the murderer had been instigated by the enemy (it was emphasized that his mother was Italian and that a great deal of important correspondence in that language had been found on him).

<sup>2</sup> The tale was embroidered — it was said that the murderer was chosen amongst the four boys by throwing dice.

November 8th, was very much disgusted by the turn of events. The Abbé Cordier and d'Astier took care to stir up this rancour. In all probability, d'Astier introduced him to the Pretender, who, as might be expected, floated very high, very high indeed, above this sinister plot. The young man was given to see before him, in the near future, magnificent possibilities of freedom. He was only too willing to be convinced, especially as he was promised immunity. He had no reason not to believe the head of the police when the latter promised to keep him in a safe place until the Prince issued his first reprieve in the boy's favour.

'So Bonnier accepted. The date for the assassination was fixed: December 24th, by common consent. It was a favourable date to choose. The press had given much publicity to the "dinner to an Allied soldier" scheme, which asked each Algerian family to welcome to their table one soldier on Christmas Eve. Should anything go wrong, the barracks would not have their usual contingent. Moreover, both Giraud and Eisenhower were to be absent from Algiers. In the minds of the conspirators, the Christmas and New Year celebrations would hold up proceedings, would prevent a tribunal sitting and so grant the delay required for the preliminaries of the Comte de Paris' accession to power. And if a putsch were possible, Christmas Day was perfectly chosen.

'So "Lieutenant" Cordier gave absolution to the unfortunate Bonnier who had already bought the revolver with a few friends from the *Corps Francs*. D'Astier produced a car which he had personally used on several occasions.

'So Darlan was assassinated by Bonnier de la Chapelle, a mere instrument in the hands of d'Astier and of Cordier who then immediately abandoned him to his fate. When he became aware of this, Bonnier made a clean breast of the whole affair.'

That was the accusing version of the story.

Here is the other facet:

'Yes, Bonnier was devoted to d'Astier. Certainly he was in close touch both with d'Astier and Cordier. He probably heard both men lament bitterly over Darlan's accession to power. But then who did not deplore it, did not talk of it in Algiers? How many times since that night of November 8th, did Bonnier hear the same ironical sentence: "To think that you had him at your mercy on November 8th and that you did not bump him off." But what was said to him with irony was taken by



Bonnier in deadly seriousness. His friends have told us of the exalted personality of this boy of twenty, good-looking, healthy, pure in mind and fervent in his convictions. This "splendid lad" decided, quite simply, to act according to his ideas and to fulfil the wish which he kept on hearing people make around him. And so he was to open the road to monarchy. . . .

'But is it not absurd to speak of a plot to assassinate the Admiral and to carry out a putsch, to resort to the solution of a daring *coup d'état* when the whole of the Prince's activity was directed to take over the High Commissariat by the legal path of election and that Darlan's retirement, with the consent of American authority, was then only a matter of time? This retirement was hinted at in all the speeches, all the declarations, all the conversations between people "in the know". Curious plot, taking place in broad daylight, for the Comte de Paris saw everybody, disclosing his ambitions to all and sundry. The whole town was talking about it.

'Bonnier confessed to the Abbé Cordier? If he made a clear confession of his intentions — which is by no means certain — then the Abbé was bound by the secret of the confessional. Besides he most probably would have refused to grant him absolution. Bonnier then killed Darlan and expected the Comte de Paris, by then High Commissioner, to grant him a pardon. During the farcical trial, he clung to this idea. On the 26th, realizing at last that he was going to be shot, he was overcome with panic and wrote down anything to save his skin. His avowals had so little legal value that they were not even used subsequently in the accusation brought against d'Astier!

'The car? But d'Astier used ten different ones. His personal car was a khaki-coloured Citroën, not a black Peugeot.'

The person who defended this version added:

'I was with d'Astier when he learnt of the murder, by telephone. He was thunderstruck. Why should he have pretended to me, when my only reaction would have been to congratulate him on the success of his scheme?'

Now here is the psychological argument:

'If we, the friends of d'Astier, had wanted to get rid of the Admiral, we should have set about it in a different way, be sure of that. No trace would have remained. It was so easy: a bogus telephone call from the headquarters or from the Commander-in-Chief — we had the means to do that without any difficulty — and a few bursts of machine-gun fire as the car came out of the gardens. Or else we could have occupied the villa

of General Juin or of Admiral Fenard, when Darlan was living there, just long enough to kill him. Believe me, we have done many things technically more difficult, much more difficult on the night of the 7th to the 8th . . . Instead, this absurd attempt on the Admiral's life, which did not leave the murderer one chance in a thousand of getting away and could not but subject him to those "persuasive" cross-examinations which one cannot resist, even with the firm intention of not giving up the name of one's accomplices. No, really . . .'

I can see him still, my interlocutor, shaking his head ironically, half-forming the words which he did not pronounce but which showed his profound contempt for such amateurish work. . . .

He hesitated a little, then added:

'We did not want to have blood on our hands, not even Darlan's blood. We had not shed a drop on November 8th because that is what we had decided, after thinking the matter over carefully. I can tell you now that another plan had been conceived by us and the Admiral would have disappeared if he had not done so already, spontaneously or otherwise . . . But he would have gone elegantly. His journey by 'plane to Bône gave us the idea. On one of the High Commissioner's subsequent flights, why not buy the pilot? At a height of fifteen thousand feet, without realizing it, Admiral Darlan would have been piloted to Toulouse or to Vichy. The laugh would have been on our side. If Pétain, Laval or the Germans had shot the "traitor" we would not have been sorry, I will admit that. . . .'

I remember that as he told me this I smiled and said that I found the story fascinating if somewhat fantastic. He replied:

'Fantastic? Shall I tell you something even more fantastic? One night in November 377 young men, practically unarmed, decided to take over a town in which were concentrated twelve thousand military and thirty thousand armed *Légionnaires*. They succeeded. . . .

'But I am forgetting a small detail', he added unconcernedly 'The price had already been settled with one of the Admiral's pilots!'

Such were the statements which I heard put forth. I repeat them here without taking any responsibility for them. Where lies the truth? For me the truth, seldom straightforward, never simple — judging from what I heard and saw myself — lies in the middle path, at the crossroads. The truth is contained not only in the facts but also in the character of those

three men: the condottiere d'Astier, the warrior-priest Cordier, the young and tempestuous Bonnier. Three people straight out of the Renaissance. Three men part crusaders, part carbonari, who had lived for months an adventure which seemed impossible in our century, constantly in an atmosphere of conspiracy, in that atmosphere of madness, of utter incoherence, of exacerbated patriotism, of daily plotting. . . .

It is not everyone who can return to the plough like Cincinnatus.

## GENERAL GIRAUD

*La vie ne nous donne pas à choisir la sorte d'héroïsme qui nous plaira  
le mieux*

CHARLES PLISNIER

ON December 26th, forty-eight hours after the Admiral disappeared from the scene, General Giraud was elected High Commissioner of France in Africa by his peers. His duties dovetailed with those of Commander-in-Chief of the North African Troops which he was already performing.

It was not without preliminary apprehensions, a serious searching of his conscience and probably not without regret that General Giraud assumed political power for the first time.

For amateurs of simplified pictures, lovers of strong contrasts between black and white, one could easily draw a portrait of Giraud in which every characteristic would be the negative of that of Admiral Darlan. Giraud is aptly and accurately described when one has said that he is a soldier. He has the ideal characteristics of the soldier: loyalty, strength of will, courage in action, love of quick, sure, unequivocal decisions, and a respect for discipline which sometimes has its drawbacks.

He hates politics and throughout his career he had steered clear of them. Even more does he hate politicians,<sup>1</sup> and his promotion was gained against their will. Daladier said of him, with rather fearful disdain: 'He is a fascist.' The judgment is somewhat summary. In fact Giraud hated all politicians as a body, the more so because the few among them whom he did esteem were not in power but formed a minority embittered in opposition. His patriotism, wounded by defeat, made him use harsh words against the 'so-called republican regimes'<sup>2</sup> which he deemed responsible for our present tragic situation.

His career had been a brilliant one. This Parisian<sup>3</sup> left Saint Cyr in 1900

<sup>1</sup> These are the words used in the memorandum which he made in captivity and which he had sent to Marshal Pétain.

<sup>2</sup> For him the word 'politician' retains its most disdainful meaning. One day he was to say of a General to Fernand de Brinon: 'He is a politician, I have nothing but contempt for him.' Of course Brinon spread the saying around. . . .

<sup>3</sup> Contrary to the current legend, sprung from nowhere, General Giraud has no family roots in Lorraine. He was born in Paris in 1879. His family comes from Savoy. His first contact with Lorraine dates from the time he became military governor of Metz.

to embark on a military life most of which was to take place in North Africa. As an officer attached to headquarters, he was given command of a company of the Fourth Zouaves, before the Great War. He was at the head of this company when he was left as dead on the battlefield, in August 1914, at the battle of Guise. The Germans picked him up and had him attended to in the hospital at Origny-Sainte-Benoite. As soon as he was convalescent he attempted to escape. Twice he failed, the third time he was successful. In order to reach Belgium, he became in turn a tram-conductor, a conjurer in a travelling circus, and then, thanks to his knowledge and love of horses, manager of a circus. It was Edith Cavell who got him across the electrified wire of the Dutch-Belgian frontier. He wandered about for a few days disguised as a Dutchwoman, which leads one to suppose that for once he sacrificed his moustache.

At last Captain Giraud managed to embark for England, whence he returned to France. He was appointed to the staff of the Fifth Army. In October 1917 he took part in the attack on Malmaison, before being sent for a few months to Franchet d'Esperey in Constantinople. When peace was declared, Giraud continued his career of a *bledard*<sup>1</sup> in Morocco. As Chief of Staff of the Moroccan division, under the orders of Lyautey,<sup>2</sup> Giraud, then Lieutenant-Colonel, was wounded at Taza. He was given up as dead but once again he escaped and took part in the capture of Abd el Krim.

After a term as Infantry Instructor at the Ecole Supérieure de la Guerre, we find him again in Morocco, a Brigadier-General. He played a part in the pacification of Tafilalet. As Major-General in April 1934, he commanded the Oran region. He left Algeria to become military governor of Metz. In 1938 he was violently anti-Munich. A few days later, in January 1939, he was sitting beside Pétain and Weygand on the Supreme War Council. He was one of our military leaders most in the public eye at the declaration of war: he had the reputation of being go-ahead, brave and with so daring a vision that Paul Reynaud regretted his absence when he replaced Gamelin by Weygand, at a moment when a Foch was needed in the French army.<sup>3</sup>

For he was once more made a prisoner, when, after having commanded

<sup>1</sup> A *bledard* is a man accustomed to life on a *bled*, a wide open expanse of desert country.

<sup>2</sup> Lyautey said of him: 'Look at him, he is big in every respect.'

<sup>3</sup> It was General de Gaulle, Under-Secretary of State for War in June 1940, who revealed this in London on December 28th, 1942.

the 7th Army at Saint Omer and in Belgium, he took over the extremely involved command of Corap after Sedan. The Germans surrounded him while he was boldly driving around his dispersed advance posts in a car. By a strange coincidence, it was in the same district that he had been picked up by the enemy in 1914.

Shortly before he had proclaimed, in a famous Order of the Day: 'Surrounded by a hundred enemy tanks, I am destroying them one by one.'

Then he was sent to the fortress of Koenigstein<sup>1</sup> and met there Generals Condé, Mast, Juin, Arnould and a Polish General who must have been General Kleber. The prisoners lived very simply, preparing their own midday meal when their orderlies were on duty, strolling around the ramparts, watching the little feudal village below. Now and again some incident would break the monotony of their days: the discovery of a microphone under the beds, the arrival of a person supposed to be a British General taken prisoner at Tobruk: they had very little trouble in unmasking this German spy. He was foolish enough to present himself to his new comrades wearing a heavy greatcoat, when he was supposed to have come from the torrid Lybian desert.

From the first minute, Giraud began thinking of escape. He thought of it with such precision that one day he took Juin by the arm, led him to the window, and showed him the perpendicular rock in front of it:

'Look, Juin, that is the way by which I shall escape.'

And Juin replied with a grimace:

'Forgive me, General, but I am not a film fan.'

General Juin did in fact leave Koenigstein by another way, released on parole by the Germans — they must regret it to-day — in company with several other Generals and Admirals.

In November 1941 General Giraud got into touch with Colonel de Linarès, an ardent patriot, doing some very good work to the detriment of the Armistice Commission to which he was attached. Colonel de Linarès evolved a concrete plan of escape. It has often been asked who helped General Giraud to escape: it can now be said that the French Deuxième Bureau played an active part in this.

<sup>1</sup> Koenigstein is a little village in Saxony. It stands some 5,300 feet above the valley of the Elbe. Peter of Russia, Frederick of Prussia, Marie-Louise and Napoleon lived in the fortress before it became the home of prisoner Generals. Weygand is the most recent guest of repute.

In March 1942 the prisoner received the following note:

Day: 17th April

Hour H: 1 p.m.

The place of rendezvous was fixed a few miles from the fortress.

On April 17th, as arranged, General Giraud, who had patiently plaited a rope out of bits of material and the string from his parcels, climbed over the parapet of the ramparts between two rounds of the sentry. A leg wound received in 1914 impaired his agility: he had to be pushed over by another officer. In these conditions this sixty three-year old man scaled a wall of 120 feet. He dropped into some bushes where he shaved off his moustache, put on a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles and a raincoat, set off across country and joined his guide at the appointed spot. The guide greeted him in the pre-arranged manner: 'Morgen Heinrich' and raised his hat. He brought him a suitcase. Thus equipped, moving from train to train, General Giraud crossed the whole of Germany after a series of tragi-comical incidents, in the course of which he was helped out of a tight corner by an officer of the Africa Korps on leave. A price was put on his head: 100,000 marks or 2,000,000 francs, offered for his capture dead or alive. In the frontier areas, all men more than six feet tall were systematically arrested. In spite of all these precautions on April 23rd the fugitive crossed the Swiss frontier, on foot. He got himself put in prison for one night by the customs officials and eventually arrived at the French Embassy in Berne. An officer of this Embassy helped him to reach Annemasse, crossing the frontier once more on foot.

'The whole thing barely cost me 10,000 francs, the price of the fare', Colonel de Linarès told me later.

Once at Berne, what was Giraud to do? One trait of character describes the man. He was approached by Allied agents: he showed them the door. He would go neither to England nor to America, nor even to North Africa. From Annemasse his first thought was to let the old Marshal, his hierarchical chief, know 'that he held himself at his entire disposal'.

Who could blame General Giraud for this gesture? What other reaction could be expected from the prisoner who had been cut off from events since the dawn of the defeat, from this soldier who could not imagine that his chief would betray, or even that he could make concessions?

Nevertheless, all Vichy became panic-stricken on hearing of the unto-

ward escape of this difficult man<sup>1</sup> except, maybe, the old Marshal, who must from time to time have experienced the inward and secret desire for vengeance of an old man when he became aware of the difficulties facing his entourage. He summoned Giraud, received him at his table on April 28th, and did not hide from him the fact that his return would create 'certain difficulties'. In fact, the 'difficulties' soon started, because, besides General Bridoux, Giraud saw Laval in the afternoon, and was very coolly received. The same evening Benoist-Méchin was charged with transmitting a telegram from the Führer's headquarters in Paris, demanding purely and simply the return of Giraud to Germany.

Giraud made his reply known on the 29th. Although there was no international law forcing a loyally escaped General to return to prison, he was prepared to accede to the German orders on condition that all French married prisoners be immediately released.

After which, thoroughly disgusted, he left Vichy and returned to Lyons. He was urgently recalled once more: Laval had just received a new ultimatum. The Germans threatened to block the demarcation line and recall all prisoners on parole. Giraud was warned that should he go to Vichy, he might be arrested. Naturally he took the risk. Yet Laval spoke to him only of trivialities, though he had the menacing German telegrams on his desk. There was also a letter, prepared by Benoist-Méchin; Laval was only waiting to slip it in front of Pétain for signature. This letter 'restored' Giraud to the Germans. During the evening, Giraud saw both Laval and the cautious Darlan in the Marshal's room, only to return afterwards to Lyons.

On May 3rd, yet another summons. The General arrived immediately, by aeroplane. Laval tried to present him with a *fait accompli*: Otto Abetz

<sup>1</sup> At the time the B.B.C. gave wide publicity to a beautiful letter from Giraud, prisoner, to his children, which leaves no doubt at all as to what the General thought of 'collaboration'. 'I forbid you,' he writes, 'to resign yourselves to defeat and to think that France will follow the path of Italy, Spain, Denmark and Finland. Never mind the means, only the end is important. Everything must be sacrificed to this: your personal interests, your tastes, your theories, your religion.' Further on Giraud warns them 'to be prepared, at any moment, to make the best of any chances which may be offered us by those who have faith in us. Consequently to be able to form a modern army at a moment's notice. From afar, I submit the following principle for this purpose: the spirit is formed in France, the training is done in the Colonies; the material is made abroad.' And the General ended his letter thus: 'All of you, Pierre, André, Henri, Bernard, and you, my dear daughters, remember that a storm passes but your country remains. A nation lives when it wants to live. Repeat that among your friends. Make others think as you do, work as you do. Success is certain if we know how to want it. Resolution, patience, decision.'



was at Moulins, to take delivery of the prisoner. Herr von Ribbentrop's own plane was waiting for him at Bourges. Giraud kept his head. He lunched with the Chief of the State, whose embarrassment was manifest.

'Couldn't you take over from Scapini', he suggested, 'and, prisoner yourself, become the representative of all prisoners?'

Laval immediately telephoned Abetz, who was waiting at Moulins, to put this proposal to him. Abetz said neither yes nor no, but insisted that Giraud should go to Moulins.

Pétain supported the demand, and Giraud went that very evening to the appointed rendezvous. The meeting took place in the lounge of one of the hotels in the town. Giraud was accompanied by Laval in the role of Judas, and Darlan in that of Pontius Pilate. Abetz was accompanied by General Von Stupfnagel and Consul Krug von Nidda.

Abetz delivered a long monologue on the general policy of Germany, the importance of the Russian campaign and the necessity of Franco-German co-operation. He ended by asking Giraud to go with him to Paris where his status would later be clarified by the Führer.

Giraud refused. The discussion lasted an hour, with no result. At half-past twelve that night the parties coldly separated. On May 4th, at 11 a.m., after a last interview with the old Marshal, Giraud definitely left Vichy without intending to return. During those ten days he had fully grasped the situation and in the hour passed with Pétain had certainly received despairing confidences from the old soldier, vaguely desirous to maintain resistance and honour.

The same day, on his return to Lyons, he sent Pétain the famous letter of submission for which he was to be so reproached.<sup>1</sup>

Monsieur le Maréchal,

Following our recent interviews and in order to remove all doubt as to my attitude, I wish to express to you my perfect loyalty.

You were kind enough to explain to me, as the Head of the Government, the policy you intend to follow towards Germany.

<sup>1</sup> It was General Campet, of the Marshal's military mission, who brought to General Giraud a typed text, which he asked him to copy in his own handwriting. General Giraud added, *motu proprio*, the sentence: 'My past is the guarantor of my loyalty.'

Colonel de Linares told me at a later date that, in his own mind, General Giraud approved what he thought was the Marshal's policy: secret but cautious resistance to the invader.

When I remarked that the text seemed to imply approval of 'Pierre Laval's work', he replied that General Giraud 'did not remember' having used a single name of a person in the letter.

## GENERAL GIRAUD

I fully agree with you. I give you my word of honour as an officer that I will do nothing which could in any way complicate your relations with the German Government, or impede the work which Admiral Darlan and President Pierre Laval are doing under your high authority.

My past is the guarantor of my loyalty.

Please accept this expression of my absolute devotion.

(signed) HENRI GIRAUD.

Such was the price paid by Giraud, the same Giraud who had written to his children that 'everything must be sacrificed to the interests of France' and that 'Stresemann had given a name to the method',<sup>1</sup> in order that he might retain his liberty of action on the one hand and, on the other, reply to the Marshal's request that he should not hinder him in 'his work'.

In the ten days spent between Lyons and Vichy, it is not impossible that, in the course of his first contacts with the resistance movement, and even with Allied agents, this attitude of apparent and reassuring submission had been suggested to General Giraud.

However this may be, he was allowed to retire, in semi-guarded residence, to his estate in the Dombes, with six police inspectors and two police agents always at his heels. But their reports, though welcomed in Paris and in Berlin, obtained no hearing in Vichy: the letter to the Marshal had had its effect.

I have already quoted a poisonous article in *Gringoire*. Here is another, dated about the same time:

How is it that General Giraud, this fugitive, can have collected around him officers of his old staff, that he is able to move about freely and arrange mysterious interviews?

Indeed, these mysterious interviews were numerous. It was the time when contacts were being established with the French resistance movement, with Lemaigre-Dubreuil, with Jean Rigault, arrived from Africa, with the emissaries of Mr. P. Tuck, with representatives of General de Gaulle<sup>2</sup> and also with Admiral Darlan and several other Generals still in

<sup>1</sup> Allusion to Stresemann's famous word 'finassieren'.

<sup>2</sup> Barely a month after General Giraud's arrival in France, General de Gaulle declared at a press conference held at Carlton Gardens, his London headquarters, that he had 'personal assurance' of General Giraud's wish to put France back into the battle.

power. The Polish General, Kleber, played a rather disturbing role in all these negotiations, and it is clear that any influence he may have had on Giraud at the time served neither to unite Giraud and de Gaulle, nor to disperse Giraud's prejudices concerning England, prejudices strengthened by the military circles with which he was in contact.<sup>1</sup>

During these summer months, in 1942, the North African plot was hatched, not without difficulty. Giraud did not hesitate as to the principle of the action from his very first meeting with Lemaigre-Dubreuil, during which Mr. Robert D. Murphy's envoy explained to him the American plans for North Africa. On the other hand, he showed himself rather reticent about co-operating with members of the Gaullist organization 'Combat'. He was not favourably disposed towards General de Gaulle; he was badly misinformed. When delegates of 'Combat' pointed out to him that in the French resistance, communists, catholics and socialists had already united in the name of de Gaulle, he was very surprised, then shaken and at last convinced. He consented to the North African operation being chaperoned by General de Gaulle, to ensure its success.

But when the delegate from 'Combat' returned, some time later — after a rather long interval, because one had to be careful of the police — the whole thing was again put in doubt.

'I can assure you', declared the General, 'that the Anglo-Saxons with whom I am in touch have no particular leaning towards de Gaulle. The Americans even less.'

Undismayed, the speaker pleaded for hours the necessity of French unity in action, unity which was probably not desired by outsiders but which was most desirable for France. Giraud evidently agreed. . . .

During this difficult time, the General made no official public appearances. He was more and more closely watched: he was obliged to play hide and seek with the spies. For a week he lived with Colonel X.'s chauffeur, while the police kept careful watch over his official residence, a hundred yards away.

General Giraud only broke his reserve to go openly and courageously to the funeral of Marshal Franchet d'Espèrey who had been guilty during his life of non-conformity and to whom Vichy granted only a pauper's

<sup>1</sup> General Giraud continued to work in close contact with the Deuxième Bureau. This was one of the chief charges brought against Colonel Rea, arrested in Vichy on January 8th, 1943.

<sup>2</sup> 'Combat', the underground movement, in a letter written to President Roosevelt after the landing, made a case of this initial reticence.

funeral. This was his only public appearance. He lived a secluded life, with his wife, his children and Hubert Viret, his faithful bodyguard, as a good father and a good catholic.

Then in September, two months before the landing, Giraud did the same as everybody else, and went to see the Comte de Paris when he was in Clermont-Ferrand and in Vichy. Already his name was being mentioned among those of the ante-chamber campaign which the crafty Laval did not discourage too much, and where one found, besides Maurras and Alibert, a Dumoulin de la Barthète who was there as Pétain's representative, and Generals such as Frère, Bridoux, Lenclume and Besson.

General Giraud saw the Comte de Paris a second time in Vichy, before the Pretender's return to Morocco. He had a long talk with him.<sup>1</sup>

After this, he left the Dombes and travelled on the Côte d'Azur from the middle of September, which is highly significant when considered in retrospect, but which did not worry unduly Bousquet's myrmidons nor appear to indicate any imminent action on the part of the General. At the villa of some mutual friends in Cannes in the Californie, he met General Weygand. The two men were shut up together for several days, seeing no one. They had the rumour spread by the people in their entourage that they were working on Weygand's Memoirs.

The police inspectors attached to their apron strings trudged round and round the villa in vain, scenting something unusual. If only they could have known that the finishing touches were being put to the plans for the resistance to the Germans prepared in Darlan's own office.

It was at this time that the Admiral, sensing that the wind was changing, multiplied, almost openly, his offers of service to the resistance movement, and made his name, his diverse qualifications and his rank known to Mr. Murphy.

Nevertheless, the Germans began to get worried. They scented conspiracy, tried to obtain precise information and, in the end, asked Vichy for reassurance. The Government replied that 'Generals Weygand and Giraud were still in France'. The D.N.B. (Deutsche National Bureau) took note of this on September 25th, but without comments.

<sup>1</sup> The Comte de Paris' hope that General Giraud would support his candidature as High Commissioner after the exit of Darlan was not altogether unfounded. The Pretender simply drew excessive conclusions from the compassionate attitude of the General a few months before.

A short time after these Weygand-Giraud meetings at the beginning of the autumn, Marshal Pétain took a few days' holiday, which he devoted to his estate at Villeneuve-Loubet. He visited General Giraud.

Here one enters into the realm of conjecture. Did he know what was going on? Had he come to discuss it? Or was it rather to dissuade Giraud from embarking upon such a venture? Neither of the two soldiers has up to the present breathed a word of the interview.

Meanwhile, the activities of the conspirators in North Africa were increasing: Lemaigre-Dubreuil, Rigault and Captain A. served as regular intermediaries. The ground was prepared, first agreements made, intentions defined. They knew more or less where they were going, but had no idea at all as to when. Giraud did not imagine, any more than Darlan, that there would be a landing before February. Both organized their lives accordingly.

Suddenly the blow fell. It was the Cherchell interview, the arrival of General Clark, plans materializing into reality. A few officers represented General Giraud at the Cherchell meetings; they discussed definite agreements at the last minute.

Of these agreements, neither the exact import nor, and still less, the complete text have been revealed up to the present time. As far as I know, not even a short outline has been published, and I very much doubt whether they will see the light for a long while to come. If my information is correct — and I have reason to believe that it is — the original text of this agreement is to be found still in the Vatican, in a safe place, shielded from the risks of war. It is not impossible that the French Government may, one day, be obliged to invoke these promises to which certain events have since given the lie. What one does know now is that they were so detailed as to consider the exact form of payment for the American expeditionary force on French soil, so strict as to national sovereignty that they decided to leave the entire administration, both civil and military, in French hands, so far-reaching that they had envisaged the application of Lease-Lend in regard to the equipment of a French army in North Africa, to be raised by General Giraud.

Basing my assumption on first-hand information — the testimonials of several people who played a part in the drafting of these agreements — I think I can conjure up the terms of the Cherchell agreements, without betraying the spirit, in the following analysis:

## GENERAL GIRAUD

Politically the Liberation Movement is considered as representing the interests of French North Africa. Its leaders will engage that portion of French territory, militarily organized, in the war against Germany, with rights equal to those of a regular government. The Americans promise to respect French sovereignty scrupulously in their dealings with the leaders of the Movement, granting them the right of signing the following agreements together with representatives of the United States:

- (a) By common consent, General Giraud will lead the insurrection and command French troops stationed in North Africa.
- (b) The French Merchant Fleet will fly the French flag, solely in the interests of France and the French colonies, co-operating in the Allied war effort.
- (c) The Americans agree to provide food necessary for the country, and cloth for the native population. The first delivery of foodstuffs shall arrive within a fortnight following the landing.
- (d) The United States agree to provide all armament necessary for a modern French army of 300,000 men, with no restricting conditions.
- (e) Allied troops will not live on local produce.
- (f) The franc is valued as follows: 43.50 francs to the dollar, 176 francs to the pound sterling.

Following on military discussions, it was also decided that:

- (1) General Giraud would take command of the Allied forces forty-eight hours after the landings.<sup>1</sup>
- (2) The principal landings would take place at Casablanca, Oran, Algiers and Bône.
- (3) The liberation movement would undertake to neutralize all

<sup>1</sup> This clause is being hotly contested by the Americans. According to them, General Mast, after a long discussion with General Clark, came to the decision that it was impossible to place American troops under a French general. All the same, it seems that this clause did figure in the text of the agreement, because General Giraud made use of it in the memorandum which he handed over to Mr. Robert Murphy on November 2nd, as though it were understood, and on November 7th, when he disembarked at Gibraltar, his certitude was not contested. He was deeply convinced that he would be Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces forty-eight hours after the landings, and moreover, that he was the man to settle the date of the landings.

Vichy resistance by systematic sabotage of its mobilization and its opposition between 2 and 4 a.m. Zero hour for this operation would be about 1.30 a.m. Two hours later Allied troops were to relieve the French patriots at their posts. At the worst they would be on the spot at 7 a.m.

- (4) The United States would furnish the liberation movement with arms for these operations during the days which precede the landings.

Besides these, Colonel Jousse added certain conditions in the course of which it was specified that:

- (a) On account of the reaction to be expected from the Fleet at Casablanca, it should not be submitted to a frontal attack, in order to spare French and Allied bloodshed.<sup>1</sup>
- (b) As the American High Command did not foresee any direct sea-borne operation in Tunisia, the landings at Bone would be very important so that the British force, under General Anderson, might immediately push on to Bizerta.
- (c) A thousand British parachutists<sup>2</sup> should land on Tunisian aerodromes, particularly that of El Ahoïna, to accomplish the necessary destruction.
- (d) Five hundred thousand Allied troops and two thousand aircraft were to be used in this manœuvre.

These agreements of which I have just given extracts had been negotiated since the beginning of May between General Giraud and Mr. Robert Murphy on the one hand — through the mediation of Jean Rigault and Lemaigre-Dubreuil — and between the local leaders of the liberation movement and Mr. Robert Murphy on the other. Besides this, the Gaullist party centred round Henri d'Astier de la Vigerie have sworn to me on their honour that a special agreement was signed between Henri d'Astier and General Giraud, stating that the latter would limit his command strictly to military questions, that he would leave the civil power to the

<sup>1</sup> The fleet was, in fact, not directly attacked. Admiral Michelier deliberately gave the order for its suicide.

<sup>2</sup> As all British troops taking part in the landing operations, these parachutists had to wear an arm-band with U.S. showing on it so as to avoid any mistakes.

leaders of the liberation movement (d'Astier, Lemaigre-Dubreuil, Rigault) and would, as soon as the army in Africa had been rallied, make a solemn appeal to General de Gaulle.<sup>1</sup>

In any case the Chercell agreement, in its final form, was approved on the one hand by Mr. Robert Murphy (subject to ratification by President Roosevelt), by General Clark in the name of General Eisenhower; on the other hand, by General Mast, in the name of his comrade in captivity and by French officers representing the three arms: Capitaine de frégate Barjot (Navy), Colonel Jousse (Army), and Commandant d'Artois (Air Force).

General Clark brought with him a personal letter from President Roosevelt, officially asking General Giraud to lend his name and his prestige to the military operation. This letter was handed a few days later to the addressee on the other side of the Mediterranean, together with a copy of the agreement.

General Giraud immediately made known his reply in a memorandum handed to Mr. Robert Murphy on November 2nd. In it, he specified certain points which were very clear in his own mind, such as an assurance of the title and the duties of a Commander-in-Chief, the certainty of seeing the African operation followed by landings in metropolitan France and the need of consulting him before fixing the date of the whole operation.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Robert Murphy was aware of the fact that not one of these conditions would be fulfilled, but, maybe because he felt himself bound by the secrecy which shrouded the preparations for the now approaching action, or that he judged that the time for negotiations was past, he never definitely destroyed Giraud's illusions.<sup>3</sup>

At that time, all the French signatories of the Chercell agreement were convinced that the date of the landing was fixed for the end of November. The General still had four weeks in which to make new plans. Once more

<sup>1</sup> This is denied by officers who were with General Giraud at the time.

<sup>2</sup> From the above-quoted source: in his memorandum of November 2nd, General Giraud asked that all Gaullist elements entering North Africa from abroad be first subject to his consent.

<sup>3</sup> During September 1942, Mr. Robert Murphy came to England to confer with General Eisenhower and his assistant General Clark. During these conversations, the Military leaders recommended to the diplomat the greatest prudence in regard to his French collaborators of the resistance movement. On no account would it be permissible to inform them of any modifications in the plans of the American general staff: cancellation of operations in Europe, change of date, etc. . . .



they were to be upset. A brief message informed him that he must leave France immediately.<sup>1</sup>

Already a British submarine was cruising in the Mediterranean, waiting for him. It was the same submarine which had been to Cherchell a few days earlier, taking General Clark to Gibraltar and putting out to sea again at once. It was commanded by Lieutenant Jewell, and the American Captain Jerauld Wright was on board to direct the operation as he had done at Cherchell.

The submarine carefully patrolled the coast for a week. Her commander had in his possession maps giving the precise positions of all the coastal defences, minefields, aerodromes, and submarine detection stations. He was in constant communication with Gibraltar, whence he received his orders. For seven days, without being molested, he dived at dawn and surfaced at sunset.

At last, on November 4th, he received the long awaited order. But the night passed without the operation being fulfilled: there had been a misunderstanding. At dawn the submarine dived again. General Giraud hid himself all day in the little village of Bandol.<sup>2</sup>

The following evening, that is in the night of the 5th to the 6th, the embarkation was at last about to take place. It was very dark. The tide was low and the sea choppy.

From the shore came the message 'wait one hour', sent in morse code. So the submarine submerged to a depth of fifty feet, and waited, periscope up. At the end of an hour another signal announced the arrival of the fugitives. The submarine surfaced. A small rowing boat left the shore. Besides the General, it brought his youngest son, Bernard, Commandant André Bauffre and Lieutenant de vaisseau Hubert Viret.

More and more messages were coming from Gibraltar urging the little group to hasten. The initial delay threatened to prevent the General from arriving before operations began. To add to the bad luck, the sea was very rough and a breakdown of the ship's wireless did not simplify the situation.

Finally a seaplane was sent out from the Rock to pick them up out at

<sup>1</sup> He left France in such a hurry that, unlike Admiral Darlan, he did not even have time to think of his family. His wife and daughters remained in France and the Germans have now taken them as hostages.

<sup>2</sup> For self-evident reasons of security, the official story gave out that General Giraud embarked at Antibes. In fact, the whole thing took place opposite Bandol.

sea. But at the moment when they were to be transferred, another aeroplane appeared on the horizon. The submarine dived and remained submerged for some twenty minutes. The menacing aeroplane having eventually disappeared, the four men at last boarded the *Sunderland* which despite the very bad weather had alighted on the water.

During the difficult passage from the submarine to the aeroplane, a wave shook the vessel. General Giraud lost his balance and fell overboard. English sailors rescued him.

Only on November 7th, a few hours only before the beginning of the landings, did General Giraud arrive at Gibraltar where General Eisenhower was impatiently awaiting him.<sup>1</sup>

'He looked extremely tired. He wore civilian clothes and had not shaved for several days', a British onlooker told me, little guessing what adventures the General had been through.

Difficulties emerged there and then. A vast misunderstanding had arisen and the consequences of this misunderstanding were to weigh heavily on North Africa in the weeks and months which followed. I will report here the discussions which took place at Gibraltar, as they were described to me by English, French and American witnesses, who all agree that the personal relations between the two Generals never ceased to be excellent. And subsequently Giraud had only to congratulate himself on Eisenhower's loyalty.

Yet, from the beginning, they disagreed profoundly on fundamental principles. General Giraud did not seem to have been informed of the changes made in the original plans for the landings. He still thought in terms of a combined operation: an important landing in Africa, and a subsidiary landing on the French coast, in the region of Sète, for example. However, this plan, originally put forward, so it is said, by Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill, had been abandoned, but it had been studied in this form by the staffs of Darlan and Giraud and by Weygand.

This was a first subject for discussion. Giraud had obtained the support of several Generals on French soil. De Lattre he knew was about to undertake a task which could only end in disaster. On the other hand, might not Vichy fully apply the resistance plan in the Massif Central?

<sup>1</sup> His title and his functions of Commander-in-Chief gave General Eisenhower authority over the fortress of Gibraltar, situated within the zone of operations. And it was for the first time for 200 years since the Union Jack was hoisted on the Rock, that a foreign General had command of it.

Was it really impossible to maintain the complementary action in metropolitan France? Eisenhower then revealed to Giraud the weakness of the available Allied potential forces: He had less than 40,000 men to effect landings on the 1500 odd miles of coast line, from Agadir to Bône.<sup>1</sup> He dare not take one man from this small force. Giraud was overwhelmed by this revelation. If the North African troops were to put up a good fight, the landings might end in disaster. He firmly demanded a three weeks' delay, to return to the original date of the end of November, he would himself go to North Africa to prepare the way and weaken all resistance. He revealed to General Eisenhower that, according to information passed on to him by the Deuxième Bureau, requisitioning of French ships and troop movements in the direction of Spain seemed to indicate the possibility of a German move in North Africa. It was, therefore, necessary to establish oneself there firmly and not succumb to the temptation of taking hasty action.

It was too late. The operation had already been under way for several days, and there was no possibility of stopping it on the eve of action, for this bitter, tragic discussion took place during the Saturday. At three o'clock on the Sunday morning the first waves of the assault were to set foot on African soil. General Giraud was expected at Blida at dawn. An aeroplane was waiting to take him there.

But he refused to go. He realized, at the last minute, that the only use they had for him was to give his name to an Anglo-Saxon operation, without his having had any part in the planning of it, and without active command. He had, moreover, arrived at Gibraltar believing that the demands expressed in the memorandum sent in reply to President Roosevelt would be accepted, and that he would be invested with the command of the Allied armies, and would put the finishing touches to the invasion plans before actually taking over command.

He even produced a letter signed by Mr. Robert Murphy which encouraged this hope. The American military leaders, ill at ease, were obliged to explain to him that there had been a misinterpretation, and that the diplomat could not have meant to give that impression because if he had done so, he would have been exceeding his powers.

<sup>1</sup> American consular and military circles in Algiers confirmed this weakness. As a matter of fact the figures given to me were slightly less than this estimate. I have already said that there were hardly two thousand men allotted to assure the capture of Algiers.

## GENERAL GIRAUD

General Giraud was bitterly disappointed. Should he refuse to take part in an action which he judged reckless? The Americans and the British around him urged him to accept their proposals, to give the support of his prestige and his presence. To put off the expedition was unthinkable, and it was too late to modify the system of command, had one even wished to do so.

The General replied calmly but desperately to all the arguments put forward. If he claimed supreme command, it was not through ambition. He was thinking of the disastrous impression produced in certain circles by this landing under a foreign leader. Giraud, escaped from Germany, setting foot on Algerian soil at the head of his troops, that was liberation. With an American General, it was, after all, almost an invasion. It was on these lines that events were exploited in Vichy by bellicose Anglo-phobes. Who could know how far they might be able to instigate the old Marshal under the influence of this painful national reaction? There was also the certainty of stubborn resistance by the Navy in Morocco. And what about the Fleet at Toulon? So many disturbing questions, so many sensible questions.<sup>1</sup>

But it was no longer the time for common sense, it was the time for action. The mainsprings of the African offensive were partly bluff and partly confidence in the favourable reactions of the country, also in the effective preparations of the American consulate and the French resistance groups. Giraud was a necessary element in this. General Eisenhower's sole concern was to assure the strategic success of a hazardous operation. He learnt with vexation, and also with surprise, of the reason for Giraud's unwillingness. He had friendly feelings towards him, but he did not expect to find him directly contesting the post he occupied.

Moreover, as Giraud was to realize, everybody seemed quite honestly to ignore the contents of his memorandum of November 2nd.

At any rate, on the morning of the 8th, he did not leave for Blida and he had the shock of hearing, while still in Gibraltar, a speech purporting to be uttered by himself in Algiers, about which he knew

<sup>1</sup>Witnesses have assured me that General Giraud was greatly disappointed to find that nothing had been done to ensure a place of refuge for Marshal Pétain, should he be obliged to flee. In Giraud's mind, the soldierly reactions which Pétain would be sure to have if the Germans violated the Armistice conditions, would expose him to the gravest dangers. He had to be protected. The Americans had, however, other fish to fry and also a less favourable but more realistic conception of the future conduct of the 'Chief of State'.

nothing. He could no longer turn back: his hand was being forced. . . .

On top of this, and contrary to all likely suppositions, the military operations seemed to have succeeded. Some of his objections disappeared: others were to emerge because, at the same time as General Eisenhower managed to persuade him of the vital role he would be called upon to play (though very different from his original conception), and invented straight away for this soldier the title of Civil and Military Commander-in-Chief which Giraud took on later, Darlan made his appearance.

At the very moment when Eisenhower, delighted at having at last convinced General Giraud, was assuring him of the fullest support of the United States in the semi-military dictatorship he was about to establish, Mr. Robert Murphy was signing with Darlan the cessation of hostilities in Algiers. After having had to renounce the title of Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces, was General Giraud also to give up that of Commander-in-Chief of the French Forces? Eisenhower reassured him. He had pledged his word, and he would keep it; dare one go as far as to say that, in his eyes, Giraud deserved some sort of compensation? I believe so. . . .

However, time lost cannot be regained. General Giraud played the wrong card by staying on the Rock of Gibraltar on the night of the 7th to the 8th. In order to save the situation he should have acted with redoubled energy, gone to Algiers, spoken high and loud, claimed the respect for the concluded agreements, snatched from the hands of Darlan the phantom sceptre he hardly dared yet brandish, still unsure of his grasp. But Darlan possessed one singular virtue in the eyes of General Giraud: he was the legal descendant of the Marshal's Government. Darlan made full use of it. .

The man who might have stirred him to action, Eisenhower, was in Gibraltar during the whole of the 9th, for it was in Morocco that things were not going so well. He did not leave the Rock till the morning of the 10th, and Giraud did not wish to go to Algiers without him. In fact Giraud was to arrive very shortly after him, at the time when the American General was telling the press that General Giraud was going to take over the command.

Before embarking in the submarine which was to take him to Gibraltar, Giraud had taken an important step. On November 2nd he wrote to Marshal Pétain. Loyal to the end, he remembered his letter sent in May.

The Marshal had profoundly deceived him since, but he wished his conduct to be irreproachable. He would not act dishonourably in the eyes of his chief. He therefore explained to him his reasons for taking up arms once more against Germany and for taking back his word: the policy pursued by the Marshal did not correspond to that put forward during his visits to Vichy. In the more important interests of France he considered himself freed from his word.

He entrusted the message to Colonel de Linarès who had it given to Pétain on November 9th, the day after the landings.

This letter was never again mentioned: silence surrounded it as much in Paris and Vichy as in Algiers. And if I consider it important to mention it here it is for two reasons: The first is that the press both in Paris and in Vichy published a photographic reproduction of the first document (omitting, of course, to mention the second) in order to throw dishonour on the 'traitor General'.<sup>1</sup>

The second reason is that this November letter shows up clearly Giraud's character. It is another and stronger stroke in the sketch which I am trying to draw from the events I have been relating. Like Weygand, Giraud is the opposite of a rebel. For forty-two years he has worn an officer's uniform. That is a coat which when one wants to make a broader movement than the tailor had allowed for, one may notice that the pinch is at the seams.

But, unlike Weygand, Giraud, though also an old General, had remained adventurous enough still to believe in Adventure.<sup>2</sup> The Adventure, however, must be legitimate. Therefore he considered it essential to break away formally from the Marshal. He knew by then that Pétain was not 'resisting'. He himself was going to fight Pétain's policy in the interest of France, but the Marshal remained, in spite of everything, his chief. This preoccupation followed the General throughout many harassing and disappointing hours and many heated discussions. Not even for the just cause did he wish — particularly in his own eyes — to appear as a renegade.

At this time an incredible episode took place. General Giraud arrived at

<sup>1</sup> And it is not as though the photographic reproduction circulated only in Paris and in Vichy. Hundreds of copies were sent to other French services outside France!

<sup>2</sup> Amongst his brothers-in-arms, in 1939, Giraud had the reputation of being a dare-devil. It was his boldness which had been the cause of his capture in 1940. There is no doubt that Paul Reynaud regretted being unable to use him at the desperate periods because he hoped to have in him, at last, a General genuinely ready to fight up to the Adour and the Bidassoa.

Blida on the 10th at 11 a.m. Nobody was there to greet him. A few American detachments were the only ones present at the airfield. The situation was never again to be so chaotic, but at the same time so favourable for him. Darlan had signed the armistice, that was all the Americans demanded at the moment. But the Admiral tried to impose the idea that he was indispensable. He was ready to do anything for that, even to overbid outrageously at the expense of France. He gave the Americans to understand that they could get more out of him than out of Giraud.<sup>1</sup> He told them so quite plainly. Yet it would possibly have been sufficient for the honest Giraud to appear in order to give the lie to this poisonous gamble. But at that very moment the General did the most unexpected thing, the most uncalled-for: when the situation called aloud for his presence, he disappeared. No sooner had he arrived than he vanished. He and his small staff remained hidden in a villa of Mustapha Supérieur, outside Algiers, at Dar Mahieddine. The property belonged to Lemaigre-Dubreuil who had recently bought it. The General's luggage was already in the town so he sent to fetch it on the afternoon of the 10th, and had it taken to his suburban retreat.

This was defeat without fighting. Darlan learnt of it and sighed with relief. He contented himself with forbidding the issue of petrol coupons to the General and his staff, and had the telephone wires cut for further safety.

Thus isolated, General Giraud spent several days at Dar Mahieddine, practically cut off from official information, when a few miles away, at Algiers, history was being made. Now and again messengers arrived. The first day they brought him nothing but disquieting, disastrous news. 'Darlan is negotiating . . .' 'Darlan has signed the armistice . . .' 'Darlan is negotiating with Clark . . .' 'Darlan has appealed to the Army, to the Navy . . .' 'Darlan is Commander-in-Chief.'

What was going to happen? The Admiral did not even mention Giraud's name in his proclamations. He deliberately ignored him. One of the officers who lived through these anxious, feverish hours at Dar Mahieddine told me afterwards that all through the day of the 10th, they expected, at any moment, to be shot by Darlan's orders. The 11th passed

<sup>1</sup> From the start, Eisenhower had asked for the mobilization of two classes to hold the Tunisian front. Of his own accord, Darlan promised him six, without having any certitude of being able to keep his promise.

in the same troubled, discouraging atmosphere. There remained close to the General the faithful few, Lieutenant de vaisseau Viret, Commandant Beaufre, and his son, Bernard Giraud.

One of the conspirators returning from the villa gave me in a few words a dramatic description of the scene:

'In the courtyard, General de Montsabert was striding up and down, his head bandaged, his hands behind his back. General Mast was sitting down. Neither spoke. In a corner, Jean Rigault, very pale, talked with d'Astier. The doors were guarded by a detachment of Montsabert's men and a few young men of the Chantiers who were ready to die rather than let anyone pass.'

During the morning, General Juin's aide-de-camp, Commandant Dorange, appeared. He was extremely arrogant, and came to summon Giraud to present himself before the Admiral in the afternoon. A lively discussion ensued between Dorange and Achiary who told him a few brutal truths. Dorange left without greeting anybody.

He returned at 4.30 and took Giraud in his car to the Admiral's. General Giraud had returned by 6.30. He called his friends together and explained the situation to them; Darlan had offered him the command of the troops. He had accepted, but this would not be made public for some days. With great composure he explained to the small group — without convincing them — his reasons for joining himself to the ill-fated Darlan. There were five:

1. The army had not rallied to him as he had expected.
2. By the position he had acquired, Darlan was the only person who could rally it immediately.
3. It was a question of hours. The Germans were going to land — or had already landed — in Tunisia. Strategically speaking, it was imperative to move troops at once towards Bizerta.
4. The situation and the wishes of the Americans did not permit resistance, and the wish of the Americans at present was Darlan.
5. The Admiral was Pétain's emissary, he was, therefore, the best qualified to call for union in his name.

There was nothing to do but give in. They did so, angry at heart. Colonel Jousse produced a proclamation for all the group and sector leaders of the liberation movement.



I have great pleasure in announcing to you that an armistice for the whole of North Africa has just been signed. Owing to you, the loss of French and Allied lives at Algiers was negligible.

Owing to your help, three hours after they had set foot on the coast, British and American troops; without meeting anyone but their guides, arrived at Saint Eugène in the west, at Hussein Dey in the east and at La Bouzareza in the south, encircling the town and penetrating its suburbs without meeting the slightest resistance.

It is owing to you, that, sixteen hours after the landing of the first commando, an armistice was signed in favour of the friendly troops, which local forces, many times superior in number, could have thrown back to the sea without difficulty.

Owing to you, the Allies have learnt what a few hundred men, ready for any sacrifice to liberate their country, can do. You have given America, Britain, all the Allies and France above all the first glorious example of resistance from within.

You have deserved well of your country.

I regret to have to announce that Darlan has seized power with the full support of General Giraud who has placed himself under his orders, and becomes Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Air Force.

They all parted rather coldly.

The final blow fell on Giraud on the evening of the 12th. The Cabinet met in Vichy at 6 o'clock and drew up a proclamation read over the wireless:

The Marshal and the Government have decided that, in accepting from foreign hands the command of French elements in North Africa, General Giraud has betrayed his word, his honour and his duty as an officer. Therefore, neither the troops nor the civil servants owe him allegiance.

The amazing indulgence shown towards Darlan, who was not even mentioned, added to Giraud's condemnation, Giraud who had abstained from action and who was branded for a speech which he had neither written nor uttered.

At this Giraud collapsed. It needed but little for him to give way entirely to his despair, a despair kept alive by petty incidents: the morning

before Dorange had looked him straight in the face, had not saluted him and had turned his back. And, perhaps more than anything else, this incident which materialized the malediction of the Old Man of Vichy, impressed him dreadfully.

With great effort his friends tried to comfort him. If General Giraud had been kept better informed during those unhappy days of the developments in the political situation of what was happening in Algiers, he would have been able to realize the precariousness, the instability of Darlan's position. Had he consented to assume the political power which the Americans were willing to give him, how different things would have been in North Africa.<sup>1</sup>

I will quote here a significant cable from the diplomatic correspondent of the Associated Press, from Washington, dated November 11th:

The nomination of General Giraud as head of anti-German and anti-Vichy North Africa is regarded in authorized circles as foreshadowing important political, diplomatic and military developments.

It seems likely — though everything depends on the support which General Giraud can command — that one of the decisive consequences will be the creation of a new French provisional government. In this case, the United States will give this government formal recognition.

The policy of the State Department in Washington seemed much behind that of Mr. Robert Murphy in Algiers.

If a French General had shown a little more daring and an American diplomat a little less initiative during those days of November, the United States would have avoided a lot of confusion in the minds of those in France and other occupied countries.

For Giraud, the situation cleared up on November 15th, when Darlan gave a broadcast. The Admiral very aptly named the General 'Commander-in-Chief of land and air forces in North Africa'. He speculated boldly on the great soldier's confused state of mind. The better to convince him, no doubt, the nomination was made in the name of the Marshal! The Marshal, who had pronounced an anathema on Giraud only three days earlier! The situation would have been comical if there

<sup>1</sup> It was on November 12th that I heard quoted for the first time, by an officer returned from Dar Mahieddine, the famous sentence: 'I am a soldier, I do not want to have anything to do with politics', which was to become General Giraud's motto.

were not something tragic in this opinionated, obstinate search for a semblance of legality, for fragments of discipline, this manifestation of a blind fidelity to immutable military principles.

As previously arranged, Giraud accepted the second-rate title so charitably bestowed on him by Darlan. Eight days earlier, he had insisted on being the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies. Forty-eight hours later, he was resigned to be Commander-in-Chief of Civil and Military French Forces only. Now he was being given power inferior to that of General Juin on the day of the landing.

For, though none took any notice of the fact, Darlan was keeping all the prerogatives of Commander-in-Chief. Giraud was only to be his representative for 'the land and air forces in North Africa'. He was not to have, as Juin, command over the Navy, nor over French West Africa, nor any command in France on the day of liberation. But his soldier's heart was satisfied: his promotion was mediocre, but in perfect order.

Algiers also was completely satisfied. General Eisenhower 'approved the civil and military organization established by Admiral Darlan'.

Only Vichy disagreed. A message from Pétain proclaimed:

I forbid General Giraud to act in my name or to make use of my authority. Officers, non-commissioned officers and men, do not become accomplices in his treason. Refuse to obey him. I am and I remain your sole leader.

On the following day, General Giraud's Order of the Day ended with these words: 'United in the love of France and of the Marshal, we must have but one passion, victory.'

These dual imprecations continued on the wireless. In less than three days, the Marshal was commanding: 'Do not obey this unworthy and treacherous leader.'

When Giraud heard this malediction, he went to pieces. It was hard for a man of more than sixty to play at being the prodigal son without the certainty of being given the fatted calf at the end.

However, he pulled himself together when the Vichy wireless announced the arrest of his old friend de Lattre de Tassigny, and he reacted well: the German and Italian commissions would answer with their lives for the life of de Lattre.

Life was far from simple for General Giraud, who had to fight daily

an underground battle with Admiral Darlan. For seven days, each time General Giraud, now settled at the Summer Palace after leaving Dar Mahieddine, proposed the name of an officer for his general staff, Darlan refused and submitted another, which in his turn the General opposed.

At the end of a week, Giraud lost his temper and declared: 'I have had enough.'

The Admiral immediately hedged, gave in.

He had yet another moment of weakness. This was on November 27th, when Vichy announced that 'ex-Admiral Darlan and ex-General Giraud' were deprived of their French nationality. Darlan put on a brave face, according to those who were with him. But Giraud the soldier, Giraud the escaped prisoner of legendary physical courage, lost his grip. Lieutenant X., who saw him on the 27th, told me that he looked like a limp rag and repeated to me his heartrending words: 'To do that to me, when I am such a good Frenchman.'<sup>1</sup>

Henceforth Giraud entrenched himself in his position of military chief. One often saw his tall figure in public, but always on military parades, in barracks or military schools. He did a tour of inspection in Morocco,<sup>2</sup> a spectacular show accompanied at each stage by 'his' Marche Lorraine. In his speeches he spoke only of military matters, of the war, of the army.

He condensed his rule of life into this sentence which he kept repeating to the journalists, almost aggressively: 'I am a soldier, I will have nothing to do with politics.'

This sentence explains General Giraud. It would be useless to search for the key to the weaknesses I have mentioned in a lack of character or moral courage. These weaknesses always shown on singularly similar occasions, were the weaknesses of a soldier reacting under the stigma of being treated as a bad Frenchman, as a rebel General, as an unsubmitive subordinate. But this terrible military stamp made him also behave as a soldier on December 26th, after the assassination of Admiral Darlan, when his sense of duty forced him to perform his first political act: to take over, on his own initiative, power which he did not want.

<sup>1</sup> Curious coincidence: Maître Giovonni, who saw M. Daladier at Casablanca after the 'Massilia' affair, told me that the ex-minister used exactly the same words to him.

<sup>2</sup> In the course of this Moroccan trip, from which he returned to Algiers a few days before Darlan's assassination, General Giraud met General d'Astier de la Vigerie, sent on an official mission to Africa by General de Gaulle.

## CHAPTER X

### FINAL EXPEDIENT

*On ne fait pas de politique avec un bon cœur.*

P. VALÉRY

THE day after Admiral Darlan's murder, General Giraud received Walter Logan, of the British United Press, for a long interview. The Commander-in-Chief was prolix; military subjects formed the basis of the questions put by his interlocutor.

But when Logan attempted to ask whether the General had anything to say on the political situation of France and North Africa, he provoked a dry answer, the usual one: 'I am a soldier!'

Thirty-six hours later, this soldier became the arbiter of the North African political situation and, in a measure, of the future of France.

On that day, he made a brief proclamation in which he definitely attributed to himself the words invented for him by M. Tarbes de Saint-Hardouin and uttered for him by Dr. Raphaël Aboulker, on November 8th, the day of the landing, at the Radio-Algiers microphone: 'I have one aim only, Victory.'

A straightforward formula, no doubt, but an insufficient one. For, beside the furtherance of the war, of this Tunisian campaign in which it was essential that French troops continued to take part, beside the equipment of an army of 300,000 men, beside the enhancing of their morale, a certain number of problems sharply confronted General Giraud from the first days of his 'reign'. He would gladly have avoided them, but neither his entourage nor events would allow it.

French unity brought about through the agreement with the Gaullists constituted more than a mere military necessity. The liberation of political prisoners was not merely conditioned by security reasons. The liquidation of the Vichy régime did not consist in a simple purging of Army ranks.

As to relations with the Americans, even military ones — and perhaps these most of all — they directly implicated French sovereignty, so lightly mortgaged by Darlan.

De Gaulle was definitely right: there is no war without politics. But one could not expect General Giraud, burdened as he was with all his past, surrounded by people of the past, to lead a revolutionary movement.

He led one to think that he would act progressively. For the time being, everybody was to remain at their place, political prisoners in prison, Gaullists in London and Vichyites in power. There were more urgent tasks and the chief preoccupation of Giraud's ministers, during this turmoil, seemed to be more to justify the legitimacy of his power than to exercise it. No monarch of France was ever more intent upon establishing his consanguinity with Saint Louis than was General Giraud to claim the apostolic succession from Pétain and his vicar Darlan.

M. Tarbes de Saint-Hardouin, secretary of Foreign Relations, gave up many hours to it. In January, he issued a circular 'for the High Commissioner and by his order' to French diplomatic and consular posts abroad — I mean, of course, those of Vichy — stating rather laboriously that General Giraud was the legitimate successor of the Chief of State:

The conditions under which a government, intending to become recognized as legitimate and independent, has been established in French Africa, under the name of the High Commissariat, must be well known to our agents abroad. . . .

And M. Tarbes de Saint-Hardouin undertook, always 'for the High Commissioner and by his order' to supply 'the necessary information and indulgencies'. This circular, dated January 12th, recalled the origin of the High Commissariat, created by Admiral Darlan in application of the constitutional act of Vichy No. 4, of February 10th, 1941, concerning the deputyship and succession of the Chief of State:

If, for whatever reason it may be, we are prevented from exercising the functions of Chief of State, Admiral of the Fleet Darlan will exercise it by full right.

M. Tarbes de Saint-Hardouin established at great length the fact that the necessary conditions had been fulfilled. He based himself on the 'solemn repudiation by the Chief of State of the infringement of the armistice and the handing over of power and its responsibilities to the head of the government'. This proved 'with all clarity compatible with the circumstances' (*sic*) that the constitutional act was automatically to

come into force. A fine thesis to defend for lovers of intrigue; it would land the people of Vichy and Marshal Pétain himself into great embarrassment <sup>1</sup>

The document went further: here is another extract from it.

If the successor of the Chief of the State is satisfied with the title of High Commissioner, it follows from the above that the High Commissariat is none the less the true government and, moreover, the only French government which disposes at the same time of territorial sovereignty, independence and military force.

And further:

So Admiral Darlan found himself depositary of the powers enumerated in the constitutional act No. 2, of July 11th, 1940, that is legislative and administrative power and diplomatic functions <sup>2</sup> He thus embodied the continuity of the French State in the territories under his authority

This once established, the demonstration became more difficult because it had still to be proved that General Giraud, successor of Admiral Darlan, was the legitimate successor, twice removed, of the Marshal. For that, it must first of all be admitted that the Imperial Council (which subsequently became, with the same members, the War Council under the guidance of General Giraud) was equally qualified to safeguard the continuity of power.

It must have been, for the circular loudly proclaimed it. But to prove it would be a more intricate enterprise. The attempt to do so was made

<sup>1</sup> On December 28th, three days after the Admiral's death, Marshal Pétain made a declaration in which he implicitly recognized that Darlan had been able to maintain his fiction of legality to the end. 'On the strength of his former governmental functions, Admiral Darlan had contrived to produce the impression that he exercised legal power in spite of my repeated denials.' And he added 'As for General Giraud, there is no question of ambiguity.' The autographed text of this declaration was photographed and printed on the front page of the whole French press. It is said that at the moment when the photograph was taken people noticed with amazement that it was in Laval's handwriting. Only the signature belonged to the Marshal. The whole paper had to be recopied by the old man who accepted the imposition.

<sup>2</sup> The piquancy of the affair lies in the fact that General Giraud posthumously claimed for Admiral Darlan powers which the Admiral when alive never dared to assume. If one recalls his declarations 'There can be no question of a government' and 'I am merely the custodian of French interests' it is true that these declarations were made for the benefit of an Algerian paper and had gone three times through the hands of American censors who demanded many alterations before allowing it to be printed.

by revealing the existence of a 'secret act in the shape of a disposition and based on the constitutional act No. 4 of February 10th, 1941, by Admiral Darlan'.

What was this secret act? Diplomatic and consular agents will never know it, because the circular did not mention it. As the addressees had for many months been Vichy representatives one could reasonably expect from them a blind faith. . . .

Thus with this fragile link the chain that united the old Marshal and General Giraud 'nominated by his peers on the strength of the secret act' was closed.

General Giraud, legitimate successor of Marshal Pétain and his administration are, adds M. Tarbes de Saint-Hardouin, the first outline of the government which should be re-established in France by the French people.

If I have quoted at length this document the authenticity of which is beyond all doubt, it is because it constituted to my knowledge the last official manifestation of General Giraud's devotion to the Marshal and the ultimate attempt to establish the fact that Vichy, suddenly purified, had moved to Algiers. M. Tarbes de Saint-Hardouin's zeal to maintain Thibetan customs and reincarnate the living Buddha, placed General Giraud in a curious position, two weeks before the Casablanca interview.

For it was, truly, laying a wager, to invoke Vichy on the eve of recognizing the necessity of casting out the Vichyites, to prove the legitimacy of Boisson, Nogues, Chatel, Bergeret, before having to expel them, to proclaim oneself the only legitimate power of France at the moment of negotiating with the one represented by General de Gaulle, to affirm oneself completely independent and in full possession of sovereignty before trying to free oneself of the disastrous Darlan-Clark agreements.

Such was the tainted atmosphere in which the new High Commissioner tried his first steps as a political man in spite of himself. His entourage, except for the military, remained definitely suspect and often all-powerful.

The only distinct amelioration — and an immediate one — took place in the army. The troops which were not willing to fight for Darlan would now fight with a stout heart, and with enthusiasm for the remarkable leader that was Giraud. The epic campaign of Tunisia, begun without weapons or modern ammunition, was achieved by the trainer of men of



1914 and 1940. But the military situation was the only bright spot on the dark sky.

Giraud could not but understand the necessity of finding another entourage, even if he had not yet grasped the need of separating himself from his former personnel. But where was he to find the men? He had for the moment decided not to turn towards de Gaulle; his attitude towards de Gaulle's entourage, a not uncommon one in France, was an unfavourable one.

Therefore, choosing the easy solution, he took up a scheme outlined by Darlan and approved by the Americans, he summoned Peyrouton. Mr. Robert Murphy repeated his blessing, but remained neutral, 'unwilling to interfere in purely French matters'. Ten arguments stand out in favour of Peyrouton, all liable to attract General Giraud: he was a technician of power, a strong man, he had administered Tunisia and Morocco, he had the tacit support of the United States, he hated Laval, he was officially hostile to Gaullism and no less officially repulsed it.

Against Peyrouton only one argument could be put forward: but a major one: he had been a Vichy Minister. But Darlanism was never as much alive in North Africa as since Darlan's death and in Giraud's mind, at that moment, this objection was not a serious one.

Therefore Peyrouton was summoned.

There was another way of approach, a more important one: M. Jean Monnet was sounded. His acceptance would have incalculable consequences in the future.

Without doubt it was full time that the staffs which supported General Giraud during January 1943 be reinforced. For the situation was more confused than ever, the evolution of people's minds slow and laborious through the immense difficulties which arose each day.

The newly appointed High Commissioner had to face immediately the first difficulties. Four days after his appointment, he was compelled to give his name to an ordinary police raid as he had given it to an act of justice: the execution of the unfortunate Bonnier de la Chapelle.

On December 30th, when passing through the Hôtel de Cornouailles during the morning, I met chubby-faced Patrick Walberg from the Office of War Information, Patrick Walberg who was completely beside himself. He took me by the arm and announced:

"That's torn it. "They" have arrested all our friends."

For Patrick Walberg made no pretence as to where his heart lay. He was the only American I saw who openly exhibited the Cross of Lorraine on the lapel of his coat at a time when Algiers would have had to be fine-combed to discover half a dozen Frenchmen wearing it.

With great indignation he told me that on the previous evening General Bergeret, specially entrusted with an inquest on the murder of Admiral Darlan, had signed an order for arresting a batch of seventeen people, more or less Gaullists and having actively participated in the landing preparations. These seventeen men, friends of the Allies if not of the established French power, were:

Four high police officials: M. Muscatelli,<sup>1</sup> director of General Security; M. Achiarry, director of the Surveillance du Territoire; M. Esqueyré, Central Commissioner and M. Bringard, who — let us not omit the ridiculous touch — had been nominated Director of Security to the High Commissariat by Admiral Darlan, twenty-four hours before his assassination, in the last official act signed by him!

A group of civilians: Doctor Henri Aboulker, Mr. Murphy's host on the night of the 7th to the 8th, his son José Aboulker, Doctor Raphael Aboulker who had broadcast the speech on November 8th for General Giraud, Jacques Brunel, lawyer, son of the former mayor of Algiers and Colonel Jousse's brother-in-law, Armand Alexandre and his son Pierre Alexandre, M. Moatti and his son of the organization 'Combat', Doctor Fernand Morali who had given shelter to the clandestine Gaullist newspaper in his flat, and André Temine, owner of a gymnasium in which the active participants of November 8th had trained diligently.

Such was the wagon-load of December 30th. The only person absent was the head of 'Combat' and unofficial delegate to General de Gaulle, Professor René Capitant, who had been warned and sought refuge in the maquis. He was used to this: when General d'Astier arrived in Algiers, a few days before the murder of the Admiral, Professor Capitant had been rash enough to contact de Gaulle's representative at the Hôtel Aletti, and had been threatened with internment at Bou Saada.

Once more Capitant escaped the search. And once more people murmured that he had been sheltered by the Intelligence Service to whom the powers of a fairy godmother were often lent during those agitated weeks in Algiers.

<sup>1</sup> Prefect of Algiers till the Spring of 1944.

These arrests followed directly on Darlan's assassination, they were one of the sinuous paths in a muddled inquest. The movement was not dead with Bonnier's execution. Darlan's entourage, his faithful friends, had gathered round General Bergeret. They were still very upset by the murder; intrigue followed intrigue in order to clarify the situation. Curiously enough, sailors were not the men who fought hardest to avenge the Admiral; it was army and air force officers, such as Commandants de France (to-day Lieut.-Colonel) de Beaufort and de la Tour du Pin.

General Bergeret made no difficulties in signing the order for the arrests, General Giraud having given his opinion and the line of conduct he meant to follow on December 25th:

Admiral Darlan was Chief of a State, treated as such by the Allies. He had 50,000 men fighting on the front. The Chief of State had been assassinated at his post. I desire that the inquest should throw complete light on the matter.

General Bergeret went towards the light by impenetrable paths, useful in the case of certain grudges. It was certainly not Governor Yves Chatel who would oppose the arrests of these men who had kept Madame Chatel at the muzzle of revolvers on the famous night of the 7th to the 8th and who had gathered against him enough facts in a dreadful file of which he had had a copy in his hands for forty-eight hours, a file where there was much written of his connections with the Armistice commissions.

Would the seventeen victims be able to count on their friends still in power? Jean Rigault was Secretary for Political Affairs; Henri d'Astier, Secretary of Police. These could offer solid assistance, useful support in such circumstances.

One of the Governor-General's secretaries, witness of the scene, assured me that Chatel spent the evening hanging on to the telephone in his office in the Summer Palace, anxiously awaiting the results of the police raid:

'Each time a new arrest was confirmed, he struck off a name on a list lying in front of him on the table. And each time he breathed a sigh of relief.'

I questioned further:

'And who was on the other end of the wire, who was the informer?'

'Rigault, of course.'

This was according to schedule. For many people, and especially for his former associates, Jean Rigault remained a disturbing, clever, diabolical individual whose game was not easy to see when he placed his exceptional intelligence at the disposal of the Allied cause. The landing had served his personal policy. He had parted with his 'boss', Lemaigre-Dubreuil. . . . He had chosen to be secretary to Darlan's Imperial Council as he had chosen to be the record keeper of the patriotic conspiracy before the landing. He had a passion for files, indexes, for real power which does not care about popularity. At the time when every Frenchman played a part, where Darlan saw himself as Talleyrand, and Pétain (amongst others) as Joan of Arc, Rigault incarnated Fouché.

I do not think that I am giving away a secret when I say that the police operation which was exercised against his 'friends' was led by him with a high hand. Once more we were plunged into the time of the Italian Renaissance. Soon afterwards I had an opportunity of asking Rigault why such measures had been taken against the Gaullists.

Quite frankly, Jean Rigault told me, screwing up his clear, opium-eater's eyes: 'Because they bothered me.'

Then he explained further: 'They made too much noise. They bothered everybody, even the Americans.'

We were far from the murder of Darlan who still covered many things even from his grave. But, curiously enough, Rigault the cynical did not have the courage of his convictions as regards his friends of the fight just over, whom he was having put under lock and key. He threw the responsibility of the manœuvre on General Bergeret.

Was d'Astier going to devote himself to the task of saving his faithful friends, to place his underlings of the police out of danger. Not at all. Henri d'Astier was in Jean Rigault's office during the evening of the 30th when the haul took place. He was seen to come out, haggard, prophetically exclaiming:

'How can I be sure that I will not myself be arrested?'

For if Rigault and d'Astier, allied the day before, were still united then, there were already serious reasons for hatred between them. And so crumbled away once and for all the group of 'men of the putsch'. Differences of opinion, of policy, rancour. . . .

Some had positions of power, others had been cast aside. The Gaullists—plainly duped. Amongst the first, there were jealousies, wounded pride.

I remember an incident at which I was present and which took place between the two ministers at the 'Paris', the smart restaurant of Algiers. In the downstairs room sat d'Astier, surrounded by his usual gathering of collaborators and parasites. On the first floor, Rigault was lunching with three guests. When the stage of the sweet was reached, Jean Rigault, secretary of Political Affairs, had the grand seigneur Henri d'Astier de la Vigerie, secretary of police and personal adviser to his Royal Highness the Comte de Paris, summoned by a maître d'hôtel. D'Astier pushed his way through the bevy of Allied uniforms and pretty ladies. Rigault, eyes half-closed, leaning back in his chair, filled his pipe and gave him instructions, curtly, without even offering him a seat, then dismissed him with a humiliating gesture which he had learnt so well when Lemaigre-Dubreuil treated him in like fashion.

Relations were similarly strained between the four men who directed the first political steps of General Giraud, the men who were his closest civil advisers, to whom he listened most often during that period; they hardly hid under an outward appearance of co-operation the ever-present underground fight. These men were Tarbes de Saint-Hardouin, Rigault, Bergeret and Henri d'Astier de la Vigerie.

Giraud thought only of war. Yet, without realizing it, he allowed all this dirty linen to be spread out under his name. Moreover, in this matter of the arrests, how could he do otherwise than believe the theory that these Gaullists, yesterday conspirators, disappointed by the coming to power of the Admiral and openly admitting it — even in violent terms — had not had a hand in his disappearance?

Police reports swarmed. The conspirators did not cease to conspire for the futile reason that the conspiracy had succeeded. They still met at each other's houses. Telephone lines were still being tapped: they recorded many hard sayings, not only against the Admiral. These conversations piled up on General Bergeret's table and on Jean Rigault's. Sometimes this way of acting led to queer results.

When one of the accused demanded to know the reason for his arrest, he was told:

'You gave crushing statements on the telephone. . . '

'But what else?'

'Did you not call several of your friends on Christmas Day to tell them that the pig had been killed, would they come to dinner?'

'But I was speaking of a real pig, I assure you.'

To convince the doubting inquirer, the family of the accused preserved for weeks, in vinegar, the remains of the pig killed on December 24th.

Accusations were not always so harmless. In any case Giraud had confidence in the men he had put in charge of the inquest. He wanted to avoid all riots behind the lines while he gave all his attention to the Tunisian front, and so he accepted the solution of an administrative internment, the modern *lettre de cachet*.

So the hinderers were put in a safe place 'until certain obscure points had been cleared up by the inquest'.

It is interesting to stop for a while and consider the methods used in the arrests. Gardes-mobiles were affected by this pleasant task. And to calm their conscience, they were given the following order, which I reproduce textually:

YOU ARE GOING TO ARREST GERMAN SPIES, STRONGLY ARMED AND ORGANIZED AND WHO WILL DEFEND THEIR LIVES DEARLY; YOU MUST GET HOLD OF THEM AT ALL COST. YOU ARE ORDERED TO SHOOT AT THE SLIGHTEST MOVE ON THEIR PART.

And they were furnished with Tommy guns and grenades as well as their usual arms. Had a bloody 'purge', similar to those employed by the Nazis been desired, they could not have acted differently! If one of them had made a move!

Let me say once more, even if I do repeat myself, that at least a dozen of the unfortunate men had daily risked their lives and their freedom for months whilst preparing the Allied landing, that the man who had signed the order for their arrest, General Bergeret, was minister in Vichy at the same time and that those who fulfilled the orders, or allowed them to be fulfilled, were their friends, their accomplices, their former leaders.

The gardes-mobiles took it as said. They set about their task prudently, in force. Commissaires Achiarry, Muscatelli, Esqueyré were separately summoned to the Summer Palace and to the headquarters of the Division d'Alger for matters of routine. They did not come out again. For an hour and a half, in Rue Michelet, the sbirros terrorized Doctor Aboulker's grandsons, aiming their machine-guns at their stomachs, to make the children tell them the hiding place of their uncle José. Professor Aboulker, disabled in the Great War, was arrested when he was not wearing the

apparatus which enabled him to use his wounded leg. He was forced to remain ten minutes, hands above his head, oscillating on his valid leg, before he was handcuffed.

Commissaire Bringard, head of African Security, heard an insistent ring at his door, followed by shouts of 'police'. It must be a joke, he was himself chief of police! As he had been threatened by death several times already by P.P.F. men and by the S.O.L., he grabbed his revolver. Without waiting the gardes-mobiles had begun to knock in the door with the butt-ends of their rifles. Commissaire Bringard realized his mistake when he saw the butt of a rifle across the gap. He put down his arm: it was a narrow escape. He was taken away, handcuffed, after the gardes-mobiles had broken their chief's furniture!

As to Doctor Morali, officer of the Legion of Honour, he was awakened during the night and called to the assistance of a British officer said to have fainted in the street near-by. Paying heed only to his pro-Allied feelings, Doctor Morali grabbed his instrument case and hastily went out. Hardly had he crossed his threshold when he was knocked down and thrown into a car.

In order to seize Maître Moatti, he was paged in the hall of the Hôtel Aletti by an officer friend of his who lent himself to the scheme.

It certainly was 'work well done'; the Gestapo had been a good teacher.

In each of the cars which drove them away — to Attar, on the outskirts of Maurétania, four thousand kilometres away in the desert — were two gardes-mobiles, tommy guns raised, ready to shoot them down — these police directors, university professors, doctors, industrialists, lawyers — these men who were linked together two by two with handcuffs, these 'dangerous German spies'.

On New Year's Eve, the town of Algiers remained unaware of all this. But the lobby of 'Algiers' was in a turmoil. In the Hôtel de Cornouailles, in the hall darkened by blue-tinted panes, I met American war correspondents, bubbling over with professional curiosity. Charles Collingwood and John McVane who still felt very strongly about the missed broadcast on the night of Darlan's assassination were meditating on their evening broadcast. They went from room to room, from office to office.

They were surprised to find Henri d'Astier de la Vigerie at the end of the passage, looking distraught and flustered. He told them that that morning as usual he had been to Mass in the Saint Augustin Church and

on leaving it had noticed a small group of military police in front of the porch. He knew all too well what that meant, having been present the previous evening at an application of the same system to some of his friends. . . .

He managed to get out by the vestry and came to ask the Americans to give him the protection which the Church was unable to grant him.

A few minutes later, Madame Joxe came to beg for justice. Louis Joxe, by chance another Gaullist, sent to Algiers by the French clandestine liberation movement, had found two military police that morning in his office at the High Commissariat. These men had shown him an order for immediate mobilization. A car was waiting for him outside the gate: it drove him off to an unknown destination. This unknown destination was the Tunisian front, to which it was also hoped to send Henri d'Astier. When he heard this, he remembered General von Fritsch. . . .

At midday, my head humming with the various intrigues, I sought refuge in one of the overcrowded restaurants of the town, hoping to find some rest and peace in the cheery atmosphere of crowded tables. A domineering headwaiter would force three strangers to sit at my table. At that time 'Algiers' was unaware of the events which had taken place within its walls. The general public did not even know the names of Rigault and d'Astier, names which had not once been quoted in the papers since the landing. Yet in the hands of these two men lay all the civil authority of Algeria, the control of the press, of the wireless, of the police! The incurious population did not even inquire as to the name of their Minister of the Interior. . . .

In the restaurant, for some unknown reason, the atmosphere was a little more tense than usual, at least amongst the French. A young aviator, Jean R., just returned from Gibraltar where he had accompanied the delegation of General Mast, asked me without any preliminaries whilst I was being served with three slices of radishes and fennel, the 'special' hors d'œuvre of the house: 'What is happening? This morning, back in Algiers, I went to see d'Astier and found his flat in the hands of policemen who gave me a grilling, took down my name, my address, and politely asked me not to go too far away.'

He commented on events in far from flattering terms as to General Giraud.

That afternoon, at the offices of one of the main Algerian papers, the



editor and the director spoke to me in the same manner. The director took out a note-book, putting dots against names as I mentioned them, and added:

'But you forget Bergeret! Giraud had him arrested also.'

This was, of course, untrue. But such was the incoherence of 'well-informed' circles in Algiers at the end of December.

Whatever one might say, matters had certainly been conducted in a queer way. From whichever side one approached the question, one came upon the name of General Giraud who had been used as a screen, in the hopes that his prestige would keep the mouths of the discontented shut. But if the French press was muzzled, this time American correspondents were not to be silenced. And semi-official circles, especially Allied circles, had been swept into the eddy.

Thus General Giraud was going to be forced officially to back the operation by public declarations, pushed once more by his entourage, who used him as hostage.

On December 31st, Allied journalists were summoned to the Winter Palace. Through the red marble pillared corridor, they were introduced into one of those minute offices which are on either side of the inner gallery. Giraud entered with his jerky step. He shook hands with each one of them and announced to the assembly:

'I hate interviews. I am a soldier and cannot express myself well.'

He made a good impression and, moreover, visibly sought to conciliate the good feelings of those invited to meet him. But while he was delivering his little speech, the Anglo-Saxon journalists, having had all the previous day to run after news and having collected many details infinitely more precise than those which the General was willing to give them, thought only of the traps they would set him. They were to receive some surprises.

General Giraud began by announcing the arrest of twelve eminent people<sup>1</sup> 'whose names he could not reveal, for security reasons':

Amongst them are four officials of the police force who, knowing that Admiral Darlan was going to be assassinated, refrained from giving warning to their superiors;<sup>2</sup> a few of my personal

<sup>1</sup> Five of the accused — the three underlings and M. Moatti and M. Alexandre, father, were soon released.

<sup>2</sup> 'Their superior', oh! irony of fate, was Henri d'Astier,

## FINAL EXPEDIENT

friends,<sup>1</sup> two men who greatly helped the landing; the remainder are pro-Axis . . . I am following the well-known French principle that prevention is better than cure.

What I did yesterday is really an internal cleaning-up and it would really be exciting passion wilfully to give this move an international importance. It is, in fact, purely a French matter.

The journalists looked at each other, dumbfounded. Had they been summoned merely to be told that what had occurred was no business of theirs? One of them went so far as to insist that the General should reveal the names of the arrested men; he asked also why the identity of Darlan's murderer had never been divulged.

Giraud replied by an argument typical of his turn of mind:

Why not trust me and believe me when I tell you that it is of no interest to you that I should reveal the names you ask? They will not be shot, that is all I can tell you. . . .

Then he added a sentence which caused some astonishment in the assembly:

The arrests were executed with one object in view only: prevention of further murders, including that of Mr. Robert Murphy, President Roosevelt's personal representative.

Questions were showered upon him almost immediately. One of the journalists who knew the accused insidiously asked if the arrests were connected with the landing.

With great composure, but distinct sharpness, the General replied:

After what I have done for the Americans, it is difficult to have any doubt as to my intentions.

Nobody observed that the same sentence could have been used to justify the twelve arrested men. They asked again:

'Was the General sure that these plans for assassinations really existed?'

Quite sure, replied Giraud firmly. Naturally, (he added off-handedly), I am not concerned about myself, having been wounded so often

<sup>1</sup> In front of a few friends, General de Gaulle, in London, said that General Giraud had transformed the famous French proverb 'O God, preserve me from my friends, I can deal with my foes' into 'O God, preserve me from my enemies, I can take care of my friends. . . .'

that I no longer<sup>1</sup> worry what becomes of me. But I was thinking of the others, especially Mr. Roosevelt's representative. . . .

On that the conference ended and the journalists dispersed.<sup>1</sup> One of them went to Mr. Robert Murphy:

'Is it true that . . .?'

This time Mr. Robert Murphy got annoyed. He was quite willing not to take part in French matters. He was quite willing to go so far as to allow the arrest of his collaborators of the day before. But he did not want to pass for a coward: he knew better than anybody that none of those accused had had any intentions on his life.

So he began by denying the whole story. In their evening broadcast, Charlie Collingwood and John McVane, the two best informed journalists of Algiers, did not even mention it. Then he asked the High Commissariat for a formal French denial.

Denial was impossible. Would Mr. Murphy be satisfied with an attenuation? He would.

A second press conference was gathered together thanks to Jean Rigault's efforts. There were many strategic withdrawals, many careful formulas, *everything imbued with thorough Jesuitism*:

These arrests are not of a political nature (says the 'spokesman') They have been executed for two reasons, first to clear up some of the circumstances surrounding the Admiral's death and secondly to make sure that his death was the last assassination and not to be followed by other murders.

Moreover, it was not a question of arrest. The people concerned had been placed 'in custody'.

I can assure you that up to now they have not been dealt with as prisoners by law. They have simply been compelled to change their residence for the time being.

But not even at Dachau were the prisoners treated under common law

<sup>1</sup> Of course once again the French press remained silent, it was not even allowed to mention General Giraud's press conference. One can well be astounded at the scornful surveillance given to French journalists during all this period and the ease with which they submitted to every humiliation. I remember that on the very day of the arrests a small compulsory communiqué was issued by the High Commissariat, to appear in all the Algerian press stating that 'New Year's Day coinciding with the entry into power of the High Commissioner, he had decided to free a few political prisoners' Presumably to make place for others.

And one would never have thought — as one did in the case of the twelve accused — of sending men merely detained to Mauritius, one of the worst climates in the world. Having abandoned this plan, men of over sixty such as Doctor Aboulker and Doctor Morali were parked on straw, in huts in the Laghouat camp, kept within sight by sentinels armed to the teeth who still considered them as spies and kept their machine-guns pointed at the door of the barracks.<sup>1</sup>

If General Giraud supported the arrests, he remained, of course, oblivious as to the rest. His heart at peace, he left Algiers by plane, accompanied by twenty-five Allied machines to inspect French West Africa. He remained there seven days, together with Governor Boisson.

When he returned to Algiers on the 11th, he was presented with a *fait accompli*: hurriedly the day before his return General Bergeret had had d'Astier de la Vigerie arrested, accused both of complicity in Darlan's assassination and plotting against the inner security of the State. The arrest was executed without incident: all d'Astier's friends, all those who would have defended him were under lock and key and through an irony of fate, it was d'Astier himself who had depleted the ranks of his friends by agreeing to the operation of the 30th.

General Giraud's reaction was strong; this straightforward man, having once given his friendship, found it difficult to admit that his friends committed mistakes. Also the intention of both Bergeret and Rigault to force his hand was obvious.

His anger was futile. He found it, indeed, deplorable that one of the five leaders<sup>2</sup> who had prepared his arrival in Africa and the Allied landing should be arrested, even if guilty; but Bergeret and Rigault had reckoned things out correctly: once the trial was opened and the matter referred to court, he would not intervene. D'Astier, the Abbé Cordier and Commissaire Garinacci who were arrested at the same time were thrown into cells. They were to be released ten months later, without trial.

I am not asserting that innocent men were unjustly persecuted; I do not know. But I do wish to underline the queer choice of champions which Justice had chosen for herself in the whole matter.

Let me return to General Giraud whose successive compromises were soon known by Algerian Gaullists, creating among them much rancour

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Morali came out only to go to a clinic, his health completely ruined.

<sup>2</sup> D'Astier, Rigault, Lemaigre-Dubreuil, Jousse and Van Hecke.

against the High Commissioner. Anyhow, they left aside all subtleties and did not study the circumstances in which the General had been placed by his entourage. The chain was too entwined for a leading thread to be discovered.

And the legend crystallized: General Giraud had had all the 'leaders' of the Gaullist movement in Algiers arrested. Which leads to the logical conclusion: he was tracking down the Gaullists and, despite his assurances, did not seek the union of all Frenchmen.

The leaders of the Gaullist movement 'Combat' tried in vain to deflect their rancour to the entourage of the High Commissioner. They were thus obeying the directions given by General d'Astier de la Vigerie when he had been in Algiers: 'Do not attack Giraud.'

A 'confidential' bulletin of the movement, issued to the Gaullist groups in Algiers, shows the position taken. I quote passages of this private document, dated January:

Our aim must be the realization of a political agreement between Giraud and de Gaulle, leading to the establishment in Algiers of a provisional Republican government.

General Giraud's entourage . . . is for the most part formed of men of the extreme right, monarchists and Cagoulards . . . They are following a clearly determined plan which consists in maintaining in North Africa the institutions of the National Revolution.

In the same way as Marshal Pétain's prestige served in 1940 to cover a cynical exploitation of the defeat by a group of politicians under the subterfuge of a national renovation, so in 1943 a clique of schemers and fanatics try to hide behind the tall stature of General Giraud and to shelter their plots and intrigues in his shadow.

The bulletin continued, still not putting General Giraud directly in cause in this indictment:

Whereas Darlan was conscious of his unpopularity and felt the urge to make concessions to win over public opinion, General Giraud's entourage does not fear to challenge this opinion. Not only is Vichy not attacked but its institutions are re-established. The Legion is reborn, Pétain's portrait is once more on view in official buildings, laws on secret associations are now spread over reserve officers and civil employees of the army.

## FINAL EXPEDIENT

Such was the position of Gaullism in Algeria.

What was General Giraud's position?

Never for one moment did he hide his aversion to the pre-war régime. In the report on which he had deliberated in captivity and which dealt with the causes of the defeat, a report which he destined for Marshal Pétain, he could not speak strongly enough against the 'république des camarades'.<sup>1</sup> It is a normal attitude for the born soldier to thrust the burden of responsibilities, even military ones, on politicians, as it is a normal reflex for politicians to explain away French disintegration through the deficiencies of the military command in every sphere.

This is a simplified view of men and things. But Giraud is a straight, honest, simple man. He believes in a few intangible values: love of his country, cult of the family—he has seven children, faith in God, permanence of values established in social hierarchy. There was almost nothing in the internal plan elaborated by Vichy to displease him: the ideas about work, family and country were ideas familiar and dear to him. The solid conceptions of 'back to the land', of corporations, of a patriarchy, good-natured because respected, he accepted all without any difficulty.

But his love for his country being his main directive principle, it separated him entirely from the foreign policy of Vichy, from the collaboration.

There lies Giraud's drama: he wanted to separate the National Revolution from the hated policy of Montoire, to dissociate Pétain from Laval, to repudiate collaboration in order to preserve a 'purc' Vichy, a patriotic Vichy, right-minded, which would have Louis-Philippe as its foundation and Deroulède for its shape.

Alas, Vichy formed a whole and, what is worse, kept on proclaiming it. By condemning collaboration, General Giraud would have in a single sweep to abolish the institutions, the administration, the men and the legislation of Vichy. One realizes, without being malicious, that this operation would be painful to him.

He said as much. He told his entourage of the conversation he had had with the Marshal, in front of Laval, on his return from Koenigstein.

<sup>1</sup> 'It is the Republic that instilled laziness into the people of France under the name of leisure, in which the shop-girl cannot do without silk stockings and cheap furs among which rabbit is preponderant, where the typist comes a quarter of an hour too late and rouges her lips a quarter of an hour too early, where 'bistrots' reign supreme, where the soldiers after normal military service return to their rabid individualist nausea, neighbouring with anarchy...'

'The Germans?' Pétain had said to him, 'They are already beaten. But they are on French soil; they have a grip over our prisoners. So we must adopt a prudent policy for we cannot attack them openly.'

At this point Laval had interrupted vehemently:

'The Germans are not beaten. And it is fortunate that they are not, fortunate that we can collaborate in their victory. If the Allies won, it would be the victory of Jews and Bolsheviks.'

So collaboration was Laval's policy and not that of Pétain. But since the landing this thesis was no longer defensible: the Marshal's influence must disappear.

It was to be a long and tedious job. General Giraud could not succeed alone. The Legionaries who had at first bowed under the events were lifting their heads as insolently as before. No civil servant who had been dismissed because of his racial origin or his political ideas had as yet been reinstated in his former position. Jewish children and students were still only allowed to attend classes in school in the proportion of two per cent of the Aryans.

And censorship . . . Censorship had most certainly not altered. Why should it have done so? The greater part of its staff was the same that operated in Vichy, approved by Armistice commissions. Now instructions were clear: 'Detect any signs of Gaullism, under all possible shapes.' This was the time when Leclerc's troops were doing wonders, yet it was forbidden to mention his name. It was forbidden to write or to mention the words 'Free French troops'. All one could do was modestly to mention the 'Allied troops'.

I was a witness of the underground battle which several journalists waged against the censorship. They won in the long run: on the day when Gaullist troops joined up at Rhadames with an Algerian contingent of Giraud's forces (Goums), the censors had to give in. For the first time Algiers learnt of the existence of General Leclerc and learnt also that he was at the border of Tunisia.

But 'Dora'<sup>1</sup> was not to be beaten so easily. All day and every day my friend Jean Castet lay traps for her. Jean Castet, at the end of January, held several official positions: head of the information section of Radio-Alger and authorized bard of General Giraud with the unofficial job of editor-in-chief to the clandestine Gaullist paper *Combat*.

<sup>1</sup> 'Dora': the censorship. In French, it is often called 'Anastasie'.

## FINAL EXPEDIENT

What a crazy situation! Every evening his broadcast commenting on the news came back from the censor with blue pencil marks.

On January 23rd his original text said:

This evening *Franco-British* troops are patrolling the streets of Tripoli. . . .

The censor allowed the following to pass:

This evening *British* troops are patrolling the streets of Tripoli. . . .

On January 24th, Jean Castet wrote:

This morning the British wireless told the world, in all languages, that France must not forget its heroes. *Heroes of Fighting France* have had their share of trials and deserve their share of the glory.

On its return from the censorship, the broadcast read:

This morning the British wireless told the world, in all languages, that France must not forget its heroes. *They* have had their share of trials, etc. . . .

On the same day, the censor crossed out the words 'General de Larminat' in the sentence:

French units sent on the Libyan front by General de Larminat . . .

And, still on the same day:

The fighters of Mourzouk and Bir Hakeim will stretch out their hands to those of Medjez el Bab and Pont du Fahs. *It is not necessary to underline the importance of this encounter, not only for its strategic value. This is a big moment in our national history.*

The last sentence from 'It is not necessary' was crossed out. And we were only a week before the Anfa conference and the Giraud-de Gaulle meeting!

Administration, as all else, was blocked with Vichy civil servants who yesterday were members of the Legion, professing official anglophobia and making their children march through the streets, lined up and in uniform, singing:

Maréchal, nous voilà,  
C'est bien toi le Sauveur de la France.



In six weeks these men had not learnt to think differently. Replace them? But the entire structure was composed of Vichy elements. To prevent it crumbling down, each stone must be replaced by a stone as strong. It was not possible to abolish everything with one single stroke, as certain fanatical French Gaullists in London, seated behind their desks, advised and desired.

So when Marcel Peyrouton alighted from an American Lockheed on the airfield of Maison Blanche, coming from West Africa to replace the second-rate Chatel, it was a first step, in spite of everything.

For a long time the name of Malvy's son-in-law had been whispered in the lobbies in Algiers. I find in my daily notes on November 28th, the following passage:

I met this morning Capitaine de frégate Z., universally known as an A.D.D.<sup>1</sup> So his words sounded peculiar when he told me in confidence of the forthcoming arrival of Peyrouton 'endowed with full powers by President Roosevelt'. This is the first time since the landing that I heard mentioned the name of the ex-Minister for the Interior. I gave out this piece of news, casually, next day, before B. in the lobby of the United States consulate. B. did not deny the possible arrival of Peyrouton, but, to say the least of it, he considered it most unlikely that Roosevelt should have invested him with power. He burst out laughing . . . This is probably the kind of reaction hoped for by the wily Admiral when he let loose the rumour: Peyrouton is not the man the Americans would 'invent' to end Darlan's reign. . .

From that moment Darlan encouraged Peyrouton to come, for he knew they would get on well together. But the former's death and the matter of the arrests averted the ex-Ambassador of France's attention, though he had actually left Buenos Aires on January 9th for Africa. When he was again mentioned in well-informed circles, it was no longer a mere rumour: Peyrouton was on his way. Foreign wireless stations spoke of it even if local newspapers continued to announce only troop reviews by General Giraud, meetings of local committees of the Legion and the birth of a daughter to the police sergeant of Bordj bou Arreridj.

When Peyrouton landed in Algiers rather like a bomb-shell, nobody

<sup>1</sup> Ami de Darlan.

knew the role which this disturbing person was going to fill. It was on January 16th, when I called in the morning at the offices of the weekly *Tam*, that Marcel Sauvage, editor-in-chief, said to me:

'Peyrouton is coming to Algiers. Try and find out what he intends to do: Will he be appointed assistant High Commissioner in place of Bergeret? Will he take over the police? He is a hard nut to crack. ...'

During the morning, at the Hôtel de Cornouailles, I met Edmund Taylor, immediately under Colonel Hazeltine and representing the American Office of War Information in Algiers. He confirmed the imminent arrival of Peyrouton who was to replace Chatel. And Taylor, who had lived for a long time in Paris, and knew France and its political men, commented on the news gloomily:

'I cannot understand why the United States risk their prestige for such a man!'

By the end of the morning imaginations had run riot and the rumour spread that a triumvirate Peyrouton-Flandin-Cutolli<sup>1</sup> was to be formed. At midday, two tables away from mine, at the 'Paris', Pierre-Etienne Flandin was lunching together with his wife and Madame Saurin, wife of an Algerian deputy. When we had reached the coffee stage I went over and questioned the ex-minister and adviser to the Marshal. Was it true that Peyrouton ... ?

I obtained a curt reply from M. Flandin: 'That blackguard!' Three days later, the *Echo d'Alger* and the *Dépêche Algérienne* published a short communiqué: M. Peyrouton had been named Governor-General of Algeria by General Giraud. No comments were allowed by the censorship. There was no reaction amongst the public. It was not Peyrouton who would give 250 grammes of meat per week instead of 125. So. . . .

But General Giraud was aware of the noise created by the nomination of the former Laval minister in the lobby and in London. He volunteered an explication:

We are in urgent need of experienced administrators, and Peyrouton is a capable man. Moreover he is an honest, straightforward one. There is a difference between the men of Vichy, such as Laval, and

<sup>1</sup> The Algerian senator Cutolli was the oldest French M.P. then outside France.

those who followed Vichy, such as Boisson, for instance, who never allowed a single German to set foot in Dakar.

Anecdotes which had circulated at the time when Laval was arrested by Peyrouton, on December 13th, 1940, were being told again in Giraud's entourage. As to Peyrouton himself, what was he thinking? He was all in favour of reconciliations, he spoke only of union and good spirit. When he set foot on African soil, at Accra, he invited the few members of a Gaullist mission who were there. These Gaullists made violently hostile broadcasts against the Governor Boisson from Radio-Accra. Boisson had induced General Eisenhower to interfere and have these troublesome people removed. They were about to leave for London. Peyrouton spoke to them at length. He wanted it to be made known in General de Gaulle's entourage how much he favoured union and how willing he was to work for it. As far as he was concerned, if the General so wished . . .

He appeared to the representatives of the Allied press in Algiers as a replete, jovial man, with the face of a rake. He was full of geniality and good resolutions. 'I intend to bring about the union of two big military leaders!' As for the rest, he was merely executing orders. Release political prisoners? But certainly . . . if he received orders to do so.

For there were still political prisoners in North Africa. Two and a half months after the landings, the Allies had not had the doors of camps and prisons opened. On the day of the Casablanca meeting, there were more than fifty thousand men in the eight concentration camps in Algeria, the nine camps in Morocco and in civil prisons.

Amongst them were to be found Spanish Republicans who had found refuge in France after Franco's victory, who had joined the Foreign Legion in 1939 and been sent to North Africa at the time of the armistice and interned there; there were Jews who had fled from Europe, anti-Fascists of all nationalities, nationals of countries invaded by Germany who had been caught on French soil when trying to reach England; Frenchmen suspected of 'going over to the other side'; simple-minded people who had expressed their opinions too openly; communists, of course, and even two hundred Soviet citizens whom one would not have expected to find in a South Algerian bordj. Housing conditions, hygiene, food were dreadful. For many of them, especially

the intellectuals and they were almost a majority, it was real martyrdom.

Timidly General Giraud had had a few men released. Others who were able to count on outside help made their escape.

One day, in the tiny restaurant in the Rue des Chevaliers de Malte where Mevrouw Bras, a good-hearted Dutchwoman fed those customers who appealed to her, I found myself next to Count Chapsky, Polish consul. Leaning on the white wooden table in the kitchen where our hostess cut up her beefsteaks and personally waited on the privileged few, I inquired of the Polish diplomat as to the fate of 'his' internees.

He replied with a smile: 'At the present moment, they are already all fighting.'

The Poles were the best organized of all for escaping. The unlucky Spaniards, for instance, never had the opportunity of being 'picked up' by a destroyer sent specially for the purpose. Yet periodically a few hundred embarked in a Moroccan port where some Portuguese 'Sarpa Pinto' took them to Mexico, the only country open to them, on receiving a fabulous sum of money.

But Gaullists, communists, unfortunate penniless foreigners and all those ill-fated men kept in prison lost hope day by day. On November 8th they had believed that the prison doors would be flung wide open. To-day they heard talk of their files being examined one by one — some fifty or sixty thousand files! — and of the impossibility of finding accommodation.<sup>1</sup>

But one day M. Emmanuel Temple, still Prefect of Algiers, felt that something must be done. He put on his pearl-grey hat and took the Route Moutonnière which led along the sea-shore to the prison at Maison Carrée. The Prefect was going to pay a visit to the twenty-seven communist deputies put into prison at the beginning of the war by Daladier's government because they had refused to fight against Germany and kept in prison by Pétain's government because they wanted to continue fighting against Germany.

When the Prefect saw them, he put forward a proposal in the name of General Giraud: if they gave their word of honour to cease all political activity, their conditional release would be considered. . . .

<sup>1</sup> General de Gaulle at a press conference held at his headquarters in London on February 9th found a solution to the case of the political prisoners: 'I would suggest, if my advice was sought, that the examination of the files be made by throwing them in the fire.'

The twenty-seven men had no need of consulting each other first. Florimond Bonte replied spontaneously for them all:

'We have been in prison for more than three years. We can easily remain here a few weeks longer. We are in no hurry. You can tell this to General Giraud.'

The interview came to an end. The Prefect picked up his pearl-grey hat. But before leaving them, he decided to make a gesture. One never knows what the future holds in store. He held out his hand. Of the twenty-seven prisoners surrounding him, only two hands were extended towards him.

It was an unfortunate move. Washington and London got worked up. Anglo-Saxon journalists had become irate over a most unfortunate reply made by General Giraud. Over the exasperating Jewish question, he had replied in scarcely concealed terms that it was no concern of theirs. So the journalists tried pressure on public opinion. Soon afterwards Americans in Algiers intervened and formed a 'commission for political prisoners' so as to hasten their release. Inquirers were to go to the camps, study individual cases and 'suggest releases to General Giraud'. Should the General hesitate to set free people who had suffered, who were already not well-disposed and whose feelings would be rendered sharper after internment — well! the commission would settle the question and take decisions.

If the Americans were able to interfere in such purely French matters as that, the fault lay with Darlan. But on Giraud fell the brunt of it. I will deal with the Darlan-Clark agreements which placed North Africa under guardianship in the next chapter. How often did I hear the Admiral cursed in Giraud's entourage:

'Oh! that man . . . The day when it becomes known what these disastrous agreements have cost us! It will take months and months to regain French sovereignty.'

For General Giraud was unable to demand the revision of these agreements and the fulfilment of promises given at Cherchell was entirely in the hands of the Allies with whom he was negotiating for arms and material for the French army. Three hundred thousand men had to be supplied with guns, aeroplanes, tanks, munitions, uniforms and shoes.

The uniforms would be American but the Commissariat did not intend losing its rights and queried details in the best tradition. A month and a

half later, an important decision<sup>1</sup> was taken: the uniform buttons would be round. People breathed again. Thus at Byzance,<sup>2</sup> during the Turkish campaign, people deliberated on the sex of angels. And now fifty thousand Frenchmen fought heroically in Tunisia with old Lewis guns to oppose tanks. I remember that Captain M., who had come from North Africa to London and was leaving for Tunisia, intended to buy in England vast stocks of walking sticks and bales of string. He explained the reason why.

'We have no mine detectors. The Germans use mines which go off when a man puts his foot in a sort of wire trap. When he trips over it, pulling on the wire, the apparatus is set in movement. When the wire is loosened, the mine explodes. Our men have learnt not to try and free themselves when they get caught in these fatal wires, but to dig into the earth with a stick which maintains the traction. They attach a string to this stick, get clear, and when a little way off pull the string and the mine explodes. That is the process. . . .'

When we think that Vichy led an open offensive against our good old 'système D'<sup>1</sup>

From time to time, however, a few shipments of material were pompously handed over to the French army. A spectacular plan was born in December. French pilots were to form a squadron — the Lafayette squadron — with American aeroplanes.

On January 10th, the American General Carl Spaatz handed thirteen Tomahawk fighter planes to the squadron. General Mendigal presided at the event with great emotion and General Bergeret, with his weasel-face, bent over a small officer in English battledress with U.S. on his tabs: James Doolittle, the man who had bombed Tokio.<sup>2</sup>

Everybody was pleased, very pleased indeed.

There was only one shadow cast over this perfection. Once more let me quote my diary:

*December 13th.* — Commandant d'Artois spoke to me of a plan which the Americans are studying at the moment: the formation of a French squadron which will go at once to Tunisia and fight beside

<sup>1</sup> 'Système D' is a French expression that means getting out of difficulties as they arise.

<sup>2</sup> General James Doolittle is the only American I have seen in North Africa wearing British battle-dress, whereas at the time of the landing British troops wore an arm-band with American initials. James Doolittle had come back from Tunisia at that time, where he had installed his headquarters in a haystack, in the centre of a field, to be protected from German attacks

the Allies. The comical, but dangerous, side to this is the fact that to form this group, we will be forced to call on our best pilots and many of these — such as Le Gloan or Marin la Meslee — are veterans of the Syrian campaign and violently anti-Ally. This promises well!

I also remember John McVane's indignation after having talked to two of these pilots who prided themselves — as of a good sporting exploit — on having shot down several American airmen on November 8th.

One day towards the end of January, two of the pilots of the squadron did not come back from a patrol flight. They were mourned . . . until Radio-Vichy announced that they had taken their machines to France and had landed on a beach of the Hérault. There was a terrific explosion of indignation. Henri Menjaud, of the Moroccan weekly *Vaincre*, just returning from the Tunisian front, told me that the head of the squadron, Commandant Rozanov, and his men had sworn that they would bring down the two deserters, no matter where they found them.

This was but a single incident, but it was a deplorable one. For a few stubborn naval officers who ought to have been put on the retired list, for two airmen who deserted, Giraud's rearmament plan ran the risk of being compromised.

Capitaine de corvette L., who happened to be in Washington at the time, told me that he heard this news in a drawing-room, from Mr. Cordell Hull personally, and that the incident, though slight in itself, had provoked much disturbance in official circles. This act of treachery almost caused the supply of material to be suspended and led to considerable delay in delivery.

If I quote this incident which must not be over-estimated, it is because it shows the close link existing at that time between military and political matters in North Africa. No, General Giraud will not be able to wage war without having a strong internal policy. He will not be able *only* to wage war. He will not be able to supply the heroic Tunisian troops *only* with shoes and guns. They must also be given a doctrine. And the doctrine had not yet been found. It had become impossible to extol Pétain to the troops who found themselves confronted with a Legion of French Volunteers on the German side who had received the Marshal's blessing.

Monarchy had collapsed in a few hours, without even having been seriously attacked, because of its own inconsistency.

## FINAL EXPEDIENT

Communism remained General Giraud's bugbear.

So it was quite a normal evolution which, under these conditions, brought him step by step closer to that Republic which was, after all, not such a bad lass and had given sufficient cause for enthusiasm to our soldiers during the Great War to enable them to win. But the Republic's No. 1 champion, in 1942, was Charles de Gaulle. And so General Giraud found himself forced to a union with General de Gaulle, one which actually, in his Frenchman's heart, he had wished for.

So everything seemed to point towards an understanding between the two Generals; Giraud himself did not deny it. I have proof of this in an interview which I asked him to grant me about a week before the Casablanca meeting. Submitting to the demands of the High Commissioner, who was very distrustful of all journalists since the incident of which I spoke earlier, I prepared a list of written questions which were first of all studied by his secretariat. There were fifteen points:

- (a) on the duration of the war.
- (b) on the outcome of the Tunisian campaign.
- (c) on the character of the German defeat.
- (d) on the supplies of Allied material.
- (e) on the possibility of a reconciliation with General de Gaulle: on the political plane and on the military.

The General dismissed no less than thirteen questions which he deemed to be too precise, or inappropriate. But, to my great surprise, he did not eliminate the question concerning General de Gaulle.

The procedure was then as follows: General Giraud's right-hand man — usually Jean Rigault — prepared a written text for the remaining answers and this text was finally given by the High Commissioner to the journalist.

This time Rigault entrusted the task of drafting the two answers to his new Chef de Cabinet, Pierre Boutang — formerly of the *Ecole Normale* and of the *Action Française*. Rather maliciously, Boutang slipped into his text, without quoting the author, a complete sentence of Fichte's.

And this quotation was the only part of the text of which the General did not approve. He found the thought of the German philosopher obscure and crossed it out with a firm blue pencil mark.

But the fundamental sense of what he gave me was clear:

Military defeat of the Axis required the collaboration of all French



military forces, the joining together of men of good will. With this aim in view, General Giraud would agree to meet shortly General de Gaulle and study with him the means of reaching it.

A few days later, General Giraud was summoned to Casablanca where General de Gaulle also went, though not without some protests and after Winston Churchill's urgent request that he should do so.

All Algiers scented that something was afoot in Casablanca at the end of January, despite, or rather because of official mystery. When I met the moustached Philip Ure, correspondent of *The Times*, in battledress and sweating beneath the weight of a huge suitcase, I asked him:

'Where are you going with all that luggage?'

'Well . . . I am off to the Tunisian front.'

Ten minutes later, Merrill Mueller, of *News Week*, gave me the same reply in the same embarrassed tone of voice. But Georges Paque, who had come from Morocco to take over the direction of Radio-France, told me that the neighbourhood of Anfa, near Casablanca, had been surrounded with barbed wire, that A.A. defences had been reinforced, police barracks established, that something was going to happen there.

The 'average' unofficial rumour, the result of some twenty contradictory pieces of information, often absurd ones which were wildly circulating in Algiers, was that Churchill had already arrived in Morocco, that he had met there Elliott Roosevelt, the President's son, and . . . the Prince de Piémont, heir to the Italian throne. This legend that the Prince de Piémont was in Anfa was to be long-lived, for later on people swore that they had met Prince Umberto in the hall of the Hôtel Aletti in Algiers.

On the evening of January 26th, an official communiqué announcing the interview reached Algiers. It was from an American source. No French journalist had been invited to Casablanca and it had not occurred to a single editor of an Algerian paper that this was a curious state of affairs and they did not send a reporter!

Rigault, who had just installed his offices in a girls' school, the Lycée Fromentin, categorically refused to allow the communiqué to appear in the Algerian press. All night he fought a desperate battle against the American censorship, coming up against Colonel Hazeltine, Edmund Taylor, George Rehm successively. The altercation became violent. From

the editorial staff of the *Echo d'Alger* and the *Dépêche Algérienne* came desperate telephone calls: the editors had waited one hour, two hours, before putting to bed the latest edition. They kept all their staff on the premises, encouraged by the Americans who led them to understand that at any minute a sensational event would be announced.

In this sort of triangular match of journalists (the American censors were almost all former correspondents in Europe and Rigault had directed the *Jour-Echo de Paris*), Rigault finally gave in. At five o'clock in the morning, when it was too late except for a limited special edition to be distributed, he finally gave his consent for the release of the news. It was only on the Sunday, four days after the meeting, that he allowed the Algerian papers to publish the photograph of the historic hand-clasp of the two Generals and the portrait of General de Gaulle! On January 26th, *Tam*, which had set up its pages in advance, came out with photos of Roosevelt, Churchill, Giraud . . . and the space for a fourth photograph of the same dimension which had the seditious portrait blocked out at the last minute.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, Algiers felt that something had changed during those historic days, that the handshake was symbolical and a turning-point in French politics in North Africa, even if it was not followed up for the time being. True, there were still to be much concealment and many difficulties, and General Giraud himself was not ripe for a perfect under-

<sup>1</sup> Jean Rigault was anti-Gaullist and did not hide it. But the systematic opposition which he put up to prevent such an important event being revealed under the mere pretext that General de Gaulle's name was mentioned — so said the Americans — seemed to me so stupid that I went and asked him the real reason for his veto.

He replied: 'The lengthy Anglo-American communiqué included the list of twenty-four Anglo-Saxon personalities who had conferred for ten whole days. At the end, in two lines, it was added that these interviews had furnished a good occasion for organizing a meeting between Giraud and de Gaulle. I consider that to treat thus this historic meeting, held on French soil, is to treat us as a negligible quantity. Things being so, I thought, and still think, that it is not the moment to give the general public another opportunity for realizing it. A French communiqué on the interview should have been given.'

'Furthermore, the communiqué in question spoke of measures taken to supply Chiang Kai-shek with material aid. It was even decided to give him priority on the delivery of material. Meanwhile, Frenchmen are being killed in Tunisia through lack of anti-tank guns! Really, if the Americans have not yet seen riots in the streets, it surely is only because we are in Algeria!'

'And the photograph of General de Gaulle?'

'I did not forbid it. I delayed it for a few days purely because of psychological reasons. After three years of rabid anti-Gaullism where the only adjectives used to qualify de Gaulle were "traitor", "felon" and "sold to the enemy", I think we must deal progressively with public opinion. . . .'

standing with a partner whose advanced ideas inspired him with awe.

I will not say much about Casablanca. I have already said that no French journalist was invited. But I will quote two little-known anecdotes which I have reason to believe to be true: I was told them by an eyewitness of the interview.

The first shows how far General Giraud was still at that time from the ideas and even from the terminology used by Gaullists.

When General de Gaulle drafted the communiqué, which they were both to sign, and handed it to General Giraud, it began thus:

We met. We talked. We have established our complete agreement on the aim to be pursued which is the liberation of France and the triumph of democratic freedom. . . .

'Never,' General Giraud interrupted at this point with warmth.

'All right,' General de Gaulle replied. 'We will put "human freedom".'

Here is the second anecdote: At the interview during which the two Generals touched lightly on North African problems, in the presence of Mr. Murphy, de Gaulle suddenly asked the following question:

'Mon général, have you got a concrete plan to solve all these difficulties?'

'Certainly I have', replied General Giraud, 'a plan has been worked out.'

But he looked in vain in the pockets of his uniform.

Then Mr. Murphy, who had remained silent until then, took a document out of his wallet.

'Here it is,' he announced simply.

## CHAPTER XI

### ROBERT MURPHY

*... we have no diplomatic problems, in the European sense, because of our fortunate geographical position. . . .*

AMBASSADOR J. E. DAVIES

IN Vichy after the defeat, the unforgettable Vichy, crowded out with officials shivering with cold, plotting in every corridor; with cubicles hastily installed in the gambling rooms of the Casino which soon began to resemble the stalls in a Commercial Fair; hotel rooms transformed into offices and archives stored in bathrooms by government officials; with photographs of the Marshal stuck on every wall with four drawing pins; in that Vichy, the Americans did as the rest and 'camped' in the Hôtel Lutétia. American policy concerning France was elaborated in the quiet Rue de Belgique, direct links with Washington were maintained from there, thanks to the private wireless station set up by Admiral Leahy as soon as he arrived in Vichy.

Admiral Leahy was the Embassy's show-figure. The Marshal was very fond of him and it is not certain that he in his turn did not have a liking for the Marshal which influenced to some extent the kindly policy of the State Department towards Vichy. It is easy to see that at a time when anglophobia was officially in vogue on the banks of the Allier, people remained ostentatiously pro-American. American war policy clearly had to keep up friendly relations with the French Government of 1940, but meanwhile the Vichyites who had 'capitulated' used the presence of Admiral Leahy as a useful screen in order to still the scruples of the French people as far as collaboration was concerned. Weighing the pros and cons, the State Department's policy was certainly beneficial to the Allied cause, but it spread havoc in the minds of the French.

Admiral Leahy was the shield. In his shadow two direct collaborators worked and thrived: Pinckney Tuck and Robert D. Murphy. A third person, Ralph Heinzen, United Press correspondent, married to a French woman, was also active, though in a more unofficial way.

Already by the end of 1940, the State Department had begun to turn its attention towards the French Empire, especially North Africa. This is one of the reasons why Robert Murphy soon broke away from Vichy and played so vital a part in Algiers.

He was well-chosen. Exceptionally intelligent, he loved France, in which he had lived for seven years. He was well known in French high society, and amongst the financiers. Maybe too well, for he had very little contact with the people of France, the men in the street. The Ambassadors of the Tsars would not have disowned the sources from which the diplomat of the first democracy in the world gathered his material.

Whilst still in Vichy, he planned two lines of action, an economic and a psychological one. During the last weeks he spent on the banks of the Allier, before leaving for Africa, he found opportunity to get to know a set of people which enabled him to succeed easily in the attainment of his first aim. It was in the corridors of the Hôtel du Parc, where everybody knew everybody else and rubbed shoulders with him, that he met Pucheu, the man of the trusts, Pucheu who got himself banished both by Paris and by Vichy for treason, and was sentenced to death in North Africa for the same reason.

Pucheu, like so many others, played a double game. Occasionally he enjoyed giving proof of his friendly intentions. He unhesitatingly gave Admiral Abrial's head to Admiral Leahy.

Mr. Robert Murphy's proposals were less showy, but Pucheu fell in with them willingly. It was the time at which the prestige of Vichy was being established. So Pucheu and Darlan placed their signatures at the foot of a wonderful plan which was submitted to the Marshal. It was a plan for re-establishing the Trans-Saharan railway: bonds of the denomination of five thousand francs would be issued to guarantee the construction. Subscribers sulked. 'Is it not yet another German business deal destined to exploit French property?' Oh, no, high officials spread the rumour that very soon Americans would have the upper hand in Africa, that they would control that enterprise and so preserve French capital.

Immediately they heard this, well-informed people subscribed for 70,000 bonds. It was a case of capital being exported for patriotic reasons.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In actual fact, the Trans-Saharan was a large-scale bluff, which covered a pure and simple shifting of capital to North Africa. Not a hundredth part of the material required was available for a single-track line from Colomb Bechar to Kenadza, a few kilometres to the south, old lines of local importance had to be used, the rivets being previously re-

It is curious also to note how many decrees and loans favoured the exodus of French capital towards Africa during 1941. On September 5th, 1941, Pucheu had special credit accounts opened for Algeria. On August 17th he had annulled a 1940 decree forbidding the export of capital and of gold to the French colonies.

Mr. Robert D. Murphy remained in close touch with distinguished officials, mostly those who had been Inspectors of Finances and who will be rediscovered later, on the right side of the fence. In 1941 M. Couve de Murville<sup>1</sup> was transferred from the post of assistant director of the monetary fund movement at the 'Inspection des Finances' to that of director of foreign finance and exchange. He had under his orders the French financial attachés abroad, M. Dumoulin de la Barthète in Berne, M. Rioust de Largentaye in Madrid.

Again in 1941, M. Leroy Baulieu became Government Commissioner to the Bank of West Africa and Director for Foreign Trade in the office of the Secretary for Economic Affairs.

M. Alfred Pose, director of the B.N.C.I., M. Ludovic Tron, director of Moroccan finance, who had previously also been Inspector of Finance, were equally, if not friends, at least close acquaintances of the diplomat.

Can it not be said that if these were the men working towards the same aim — preserving French gold and capital from the Germans — it was no longer only chance which came into play? It was also more than chance when, at that time, two large loans were covered in France, one of five hundred and forty million francs for the Moroccan Government, the other of eighteen hundred million francs for the general Government of Algeria.

During this time, Mr. Robert Murphy steadily continued his negotiations with General Weygand. His economic activity was at its height. He succeeded exceedingly well in this field, for soon contracts promising economic help from the United States to North Africa were signed, the Weygand-Murphy agreements of which I have already spoken. They were advantageous to the United States because:

<sup>1</sup> French Ambassador in Rome, in 1944.

---

moved. They got no further than Kenadza, but to reach even that point required many official speeches and opening ceremonies. A magnificent white self-propelled engine — the only one — was photographed from every angle . . . after which it was bought up by the Moroccan Railways and used on the Rabat line.

- (1) They justified the presence of Mr. Murphy in Algiers.
- (2) They made North Africa dependent on the United States so that the latter could produce pressure when the time came.
- (3) They helped the most effective propaganda amongst the natives, especially the Moroccans whom the Americans particularly patronized.
- (4) They enabled American observers to come and investigate the exact internal consumption of imported foods, allowing for no requisitioning by the Axis. These observers were, in fact, the forerunners of the landings on the heels of Robert Murphy.

This was the period of initial and careful contacts being established between Mr. Robert Murphy and elements of French resistance. It was the time also of the first approaches to General Weygand. Alas, as I have already said, Weygand refused. . . .

Mr. Robert Murphy was feeling his way. He felt that the wish to resist was strengthening but he looked in vain for a leader with whom to come to terms. Weygand was this potential leader. In the interval between his departure and Giraud's escape, Mr. Robert Murphy found no serious candidate amongst the young patriots. Full of good-will, they themselves were in need of guidance. The conspirators of Algiers, I know, will say to me reproachfully:

'No leader? And d'Astier?' This from the Gaullists.

'What about Van Hecke?' From the Chantiers de Jeunesse.

'And Jousse?' From the military.

'And what about me?' This from Lemaigre-Dubreuil.

Their opinions were decidedly too divided and Mr. Robert Murphy hesitated for a long time before putting his trust in them. Let us note that right up to the moment when General Giraud was 'contacted' — to use the conspirators' own term — and had agreed to shield the operation, never for one instant did Robert Murphy consider the possibility of calling on General de Gaulle. At that period it is, moreover, unlikely that the latter would have been unanimously agreed upon.

'We were not Gaullists,' one of the heads of the Chantiers told me. 'We had no men belonging to General de Gaulle.' Proof of this lies in the fact that he was not informed of the date of the landing, otherwise he would have been told. . . .

• I was told by others, equally sincere, that had they guessed that the whole operation was not done for the benefit of General de Gaulle they would have taken no part.

Such divergent views justified Robert Murphy's ostracism. He volunteered the remark:

'The whole army would have resisted de Gaulle. We want no unnecessary bloodshed.'

With the escape of Giraud a possible leader appeared on the scene. Robert Murphy had known Giraud for three years, the two men having met during the summer of 1938 when France, feeling catastrophe looming ahead, multiplied military processions, parades, displays. It was during a Franco-American ceremony at Pont-à-Mousson that the counsellor of the American Embassy met the Military Governor of Metz. They seemed to take to each other, had a long conversation and later met again.

So it was only a question of renewing friendship. Through Lemaigre-Dubreuil this took place as early as May. Giraud hesitated to give his immediate adhesion and talks went on until Cherchell. Mr. Robert Murphy led these talks with the caution of a diplomat. He never gave his signature without covering himself by the final approval of President Roosevelt or the State Department. He was fond, when replying to demands, of using such expressions as 'The President will certainly agree. . . .'

This was an easy way out. And so General Giraud arrived in Gibraltar convinced that he was to play the role already reserved, in point of fact, for General Eisenhower.

Still following the same line of thought, Mr. Roosevelt's envoy probably deemed it necessary to advise Washington of the 'offer of services' made to him in October 1942 by Admiral Darlan, instead of refusing point blank when it was transmitted to him in Guyotville, through Colonel Chrétien.

I insist on the fact that the offer was made a few days before the Cherchell interview, when all agreements had been reached in principle with General Giraud. Yet Robert Murphy did not dismiss Darlan's messenger: he 'examined' the proposals set forth. Such are the sinuous paths of diplomacy.

It was shortly after sending his representative to Robert Murphy that the Admiral went to Africa for the first time. He arrived on October



20th. The Chercell interview took place on the 22nd. Robert Murphy undoubtedly warned General Clark during his conversations with him of Darlan's amazing proposals. It is also beyond doubt that Darlan went to Morocco and Algeria with the intention and hope of 'talking' with Mr. Roosevelt's and General Eisenhower's representatives, should they desire to start negotiations.

The Admiral remained in Algiers till the 30th. On October 29th, ten days before the landing, he saw Robert Murphy. To-day the latter is the only person alive who could tell us what took place.

It was then that Henri d'Astier de la Vigerie and Jean Rigault were summoned and told that Darlan's offers of service had been rejected. Maybe they had, but Darlan — the person most concerned in the matter — was not at all convinced of it. For, like Giraud, Mast and all the conspirators, the Admiral was totally unaware of the imminence of the landing when he reached Africa on October 20th, yet ten days later, on his return to Vichy, he seemed to know better. He left his wife, his chief of staff, Admiral Battet and a faithful follower, the head of his police force, Capitaine de frégate Hourcade, in Algiers.

An overwhelming fact which shows Darlan's premeditation and also that Mr. Robert Murphy had not completely destroyed his hopes of playing a part in the coming operations, is that *he warned nobody in Vichy of the American landing of which he now knew the imminence: put nobody on their guard: took no precautionary measures.* On the contrary, in all his declarations he emphasized the danger confronting Dakar and French West Africa which were not in the scheme. The day after General Giraud was asked to embark as quickly as possible, Darlan hurriedly left Vichy for Algiers, *having received a telegram from Admiral Fenard!* This telegram was sent from Algiers on November 4th, the day on which a few of the conspirators were told by Mr. Murphy that the operation was to take place on the 8th.

Obviously the United States Minister was aware of Darlan's arrival. He discussed the matter with the principal French leaders of the conspiracy.

What should happen to Darlan? They all agreed on this point: he must be made prisoner with the others. But what after that? The young Frenchmen would have liked to have him confined to the villa in Guyotville which had been provided for such a purpose. Finally Mr. Murphy advised — and they agreed with him — to have him

merely put under proper guard at the spot where he would be arrested.

Everything went off according to schedule: Darlan was taken prisoner at the Villa des Oliviers and a messenger came to Mr. Murphy at 26 Rue Michelet to inform him of this fact. Immediately Mr. Murphy drove to El Biar to see him, in the car which was to continue towards Blida to greet General Giraud on his arrival at the airport where he was expected.

The two men met shortly after one a.m. Mr. Robert Murphy then suggested to Admiral Darlan that he might 'pass over to the dissidents', putting himself on the side of the Allies.

This proposal was, therefore, made two hours before the first shot was fired, when the 'putsch' was succeeding in the town better than could have been anticipated, when the plans drawn up at Cherchell were being carried out without a hitch, when General Giraud, to whom definite promises had been made, was expected. There was no military resistance to oppose, no unforeseen element modified the perfect development of the operation, Mr. Murphy had no need to improvise. Had the Admiral been removed, isolated in Guyotville, the plans would have been fulfilled as though he were not there. But, instead of that, he was left in Algiers, where he was freed in the morning to take the lead of the resistance and to stop it when it so suited him — for he was by then sure of his hand and felt that the Americans would negotiate with him and not with Giraud.

These facts were disturbing. Why did Mr. Murphy offer Darlan on November 8th that which he had refused to him in October, namely collaboration?

There are three possibilities:

(1) Mr. Robert Murphy and Admiral Darlan had already come to terms on October 29th, at least as far as co-operation was concerned. This supposition is not, however, a very likely one.

(2) Mr. Robert Murphy, although he refused the Admiral's offer to place himself at the service of the Americans, guessed that he would be warned in time of the date of the landing<sup>1</sup> and would then immediately hasten to Algiers. So he decided to be guided by fate: if Darlan happened

<sup>1</sup> The French conspirators of Algiers did not hide the fact that in the whole matter Jean Rigault played a most dubious part. According to them, Rigault remained in touch with Fenard and it was thanks to him that Darlan was warned. They also said that Rigault kept Nogues informed of everything planned. Although such a possibility need not be rejected, one must admit that the story told by d'Astier de la Vigerie's friends is certain not to be completely objective as far as Rigault is concerned.

to be in Algiers on November 8th, he would have to be taken into consideration and it would be necessary to negotiate with him.

(3) Mr. Robert Murphy was taken by surprise when Darlan did arrive. The diplomat knew all about the weakness of American troops engaged in the African operation. He also knew that the Admiral was aware of the imminence of the landings and his former proposal showed that he was not adverse to co-operating. This was a trump card which must be held, regardless of previous plans.

Admitting the best of these possibilities,<sup>1</sup> that is the third—which is also the most likely to be true—Mr. Murphy surrendered to the feverish excitement of those last hours and gave little credit to the plans established beforehand. Did he guess the difficulties which were to arise with General Giraud following on the misunderstanding he had allowed to gain ground? Did he take fright at General Eisenhower's optimism, realizing the weakness of the means at his disposal? Did he mistrust, right up to the last minute, the French 'shock troops' which had not received the promised quantity of arms and munitions?

At all events—even if one goes so far as to admit that the former offer made by Darlan was turned down definitely at the time when it was made, without any thought of re-examining it—the idea of making use of the Admiral was born during the night of the seventh to the eighth November, before the first Allied soldier trod the soil of Africa, and not after, as was currently reported.

Moreover, this hasty last minute improvisation was too completely in the line of the State Department for Mr. Robert Murphy not to feel justified in taking the initiative, and even a personal responsibility. The policy for making use of Darlan was not a short-term policy as Algiers thought at the time. It was in accordance with the general foreign policy of the United States, which consisted in dealing by preference with those in power at the time, without worrying too much about the quality of the feelings attached. The main virtue of that which exists is the fact that it does exist. . .

The ideas which prevailed in occupied Europe were of a somewhat

<sup>1</sup> I reject *a priori* the official version which Mr. Robert Murphy made Mr. Demaree Bess put forward in a series of articles appearing in the *Saturday Evening Post* and according to which Murphy really believed Darlan's arrival to be accidental and hoped that he would return to Vichy before November 8th. When one considers the facts I have mentioned, it is impossible to assume that the American diplomat could have been so naive.

different nature, but, quite apart from ignoring this, Mr. Murphy did not need to consider such matters. There was no doubt that Darlan was the highest authority of the Marshal's government then in Algiers and it was with the Pétain government that, right up to November 1942, the United States maintained diplomatic relations.

Besides, as the hours slipped by, they brought with them justifications for Mr. Robert Murphy. General Ryder, too timid, could not make up his mind to enter Algiers before the evening in order to take over from the young Frenchmen. Nor did General Giraud, who could have put a stop to resistance, arrive in Algiers.

Confronted with this last fact, Mr. Robert Murphy brought General Ryder to Admiral Darlan to sign a local armistice pact. It was the ratification of the *fait accompli*. When General Clark landed on the 9th, he had only to carry on negotiations already started on the 8th by Mr. Murphy. When General Eisenhower and General Giraud arrived on the 10th, they could but submit to the situation already established.

I have told previously how General Eisenhower, on the 10th, in Algiers, was determined to fulfil the promises made to General Giraud. At that moment there was an underground battle going on between the diplomat and the Commander-in-Chief. This state did not last long: Eisenhower had a hundred other more important matters in mind, his presence was necessary at Oran and he went there for a short time, leaving General Clark in Algiers to defend as best he could the military interests of the United States. He threw up the sponge by stating before witnesses:

'After all, I am only a soldier. I do not understand anything connected with diplomacy!'<sup>1</sup>

At noon on the 10th, the conversations started by Mr. Murphy came to an end. Darlan, ever wily, had inserted in the text of the armistice, countersigned by General Clark, a sentence in which he declared that 'he took over authority in North Africa in the name of the Marshal'.

Thus came to life, created out of nothing by Mr. Robert Murphy, the political power of Admiral Darlan in North Africa and its justification through 'military necessities'.

When events swooped down as they did during those November days at such a speed that those who should have had a grasp over them were

<sup>1</sup> General Eisenhower has, indeed, no pretensions of being a diplomat. He is often heard telling the story that before going to West Point Military School in 1910, he was a cowboy.

overwhelmed, it is clear that policy must adapt itself. But between the time when a local military armistice was signed on the 8th up to the total seizure of political power over North Africa granted on the 10th, hardly forty hours had passed.

Those who opened the path to this policy and so rapidly lost control over it, will receive their judgment in the future.

Most of the population of Algeria accepted these events philosophically. I will quote a few pages of my diary, written on November 12th, they show how the support given to Darlan by the Americans was interpreted:

When I heard that Darlan was in Algiers, I instinctively said to some friends:

'I hope the Americans will shoot him!'

This caused great indignation, due to a large photograph of Pétain stuck on the wall.

To-day I met these same friends. With a gesture half compassionate, half ironical, they handed me the *Echo d'Alger*:

'Well, did they shoot him! No, they have given him power. . . '

And they explained that by placing Darlan in power, the Americans had officially recognized the French State, the National Revolution, the Marshal and even found excuses for collaboration.

Somewhat vexed, I left them, rather coldly. I went to the hall of the Aletti where I might meet, so I had been told, Captain Randolph Churchill. The hall was crowded, the corridors packed, and to push one's way to the bar one had to get through five rows of British midshipmen, American officers and flight-lieutenants. A revolting, sweet, sparkling wine was being sold in vast quantities for twenty francs the glass. Every time a woman entered discussions ceased. Twenty voices courteously offered: 'Tchempègne!'

If the lady was not alone, they went so far as to offer a glass to her husband or friend. I must admit that the ladies who frequented the bar seldom snubbed those who spoke to them.

Huddled up on a stool, at the bar, looking most melancholy, I saw one of the young men who had participated in the putsch of the 8th. He too handed me the *Echo d'Alger*:

'Do you realize it? Months of danger and work to reach the point

where Mr. Murphy produces a small Quisling out of his pocket. It is for that that we worked! Garçon, a Dubonnet. . . .

But the waiter was too busy to hear. Scornfully he was arguing with a customer who obstinately repeated:

'Whisky . . . whisky. . . .'

Respectfully, in perfect good taste, he handed him a glass of white wine saying:

'That will have to do. Monsieur is already completely tight.'

The sham champagne was warm, the room stuffy, filled with noise, with the smell of humanity. Each ensconced in a leather arm-chair, in a corner of the hall, M. Pierre-Etienne Flandin and Professor William Rappart, of the League of Nations, looked untiringly on the scene with the curiosity of entomologists.

That is Liberation!

The ideas at the back of Mr. Robert Murphy's mind during those troubled days kept all Algiers occupied. But 'all Algiers' was made up of Frenchmen from France, voluntary exiles; 'all Algiers' was well behaved and not sure that it had not already enough things begging forgiveness to talk too loud about them.

So it was with surprise that one heard the Americans often judge their representatives more severely than did the French. Gradually, during the ensuing weeks, as a Frenchwoman, deprived for almost thirty months of the liberty to say openly what I thought when it happened not to be all-too-flattering to the Marshal's government, I began to marvel that my American friends should retain such an independent spirit in war-time.

Soon, with the progress of events which strengthened the official position of the United States, I became aware of groups opposed to Mr. Robert Murphy's policy, which closely followed French public opinion, gathering their information from it and finally approaching Monsieur Durand, the average Frenchman, whose opinions were rather different from those which Mr. Robert Murphy collected in the drawing-rooms of the *Princesse de Polignac* or the *Princesse de Ligne*.

I was in touch mainly with two of these groups during those feverish weeks: the groups of the Anglo-Saxon war correspondents and of the Psychological Warfare Section.

War correspondents in Algiers stayed at the Hôtel Aletti and spent

most of their free time in a place called 'Le Paris', which they called, filled with a kind of nostalgia for Paris, 'the Café de Paris'. According to their estimation, after much careful research, they declared that it was the gathering-place of the highest percentage of pretty girls.

I soon got into the habit of meeting there a few good friends. Lowell Bennett,<sup>1</sup> youngest of the war correspondents, was twenty-two. He represented the International News Service. He was tall and freckled like a bird's egg. He had volunteered for the French Foreign Legion in 1939, been taken prisoner by the Germans and released on condition that he did not take up arms against the Reich. Soon after, he became a parachutist 'with de Gaulle'. He was then due to leave for the Tunisian front and carried with him, in case of emergency, a large regulation revolver. Lowell Bennett was, moreover, in distress: he had exchanged on the previous day with the Hôtel Aletti porter, his only pair of braces for a bottle of Armagnac.

'Tommy' Watson, an English journalist — who looked like 'a major back from India' — was the other representative of the International News Service. He was more competent in these matters. He had acquired the art of travelling, and amongst other useful objects he carried in his luggage a few bottles of Chateauneuf-du-Pape. He wore the apple-green armband with the white 'C' stamped on it. As to Knickerbocker, he wore one on each arm so as to avoid the dreadful tragedy of passing unnoticed. His faithful photographer, Kellogg, followed him, in naval uniform, as ornamented as an Admiral's. I have the greatest admiration for Knickerbocker, dating from the day when, thanks to him, there appeared on our table at a snack-bar near the Rue d'Isly a duck cooked with oranges such as one only hears about now in fairy tales in Europe or on the Black Market. That evening Knickerbocker behaved like a choir-boy. Of pink complexion, wearing pink-rimmed spectacles, with auburn hair almost verging on pink, he seemed to be transparent and — if it had not been for the duck cooked with oranges — one might have seen through him. He ate politely, listened politely, talked politely and in a pleasant voice announced that the Tunisian campaign would end on May 15th. This turned out subsequently to be correct but for eight days.

Let me say yet a few words on the two radio-reporters, John McVane

<sup>1</sup> In December 1943, Lowell Bennett was taking part in a raid in a Flying Fortress for the International News Service, and was brought down by German flak over Berlin.

(N.B.C.) and Charles Collingwood (C.B.S.), the two American journalists who understood, probably better than anybody else, the incredibly confused French political situation, which even to Frenchmen was far from clear. John McVane, dark haired and serene, walked about Algiers in his helmet, from morning to night, not as a precautionary measure, but for æsthetic reasons: neither forage cap nor vizored cap suited him! Charles Collingwood, in British battledress, had the badge of 'Foreign War Correspondent' on his arm.

Tall Bill Stoneman, of the *Chicago Daily News*, had adopted the Churchill 'V' for his own personal use: soon half the shoe cleaners of Algiers were making the same gesture.

Such were a few of the many war correspondents. They were one and all curious as to the state of mind of the population and I was asked ten times a day the question:

'After all, are they, or are they not, pleased that we have come?'

They were so full of good-will that I did not dare answer them openly. I resorted to careful hedging: Darlan in power is not exactly the wish of most people. . . .

They interrupted me by wholeheartedly agreeing and so I discovered with surprise that American foreign policy was not a single-minded one and that, even in North Africa, there were two opposing groups of opinion. That evening I got to know others who were 'anti'.

'If you are free at six o'clock, come to the bar of the Aletti', Charlie Collingwood had said to me, with his dreadful accent. 'You will meet some *intéressant peuple*.'

At half-past six I found at the Aletti — definitely a place impossible for a woman alone — Charlie, together with Percy Winner, Edmund Taylor and Peter Tompkins, all three from the Psychological Warfare Section.

I was much intrigued. We decided to have dinner 'at a Black Market Restaurant'. Chez Bouvard, in the Rue Bab Azoun, where one could still get — provided one knew the way to the second floor — hors-d'œuvre, fish, chicken, sweet and a fruit.

Torn between blissful satisfaction with the meal and the shock of seeing the bill, I asked Percy Winner a question which had been bothering me:

'What exactly is your Psychological Warfare Section?'

He raised his eyebrows and replied laughing:



'If only you could tell us. . .'

But he did explain to me, nevertheless, that the P.W.S. was an Anglo-American Service, deriving from the Office of War Information in Washington and the Political Intelligence Department in London. A mixture of a publicity agency for the United Nations Ltd., of Deuxième Bureau and Gallup Institute. Was I far wrong in believing at that time that the P.W.S. was more interested in Europe than in Africa? During the winter of 1942-1943, AMGOT was not yet started.

All conversations in Algiers at that time finally ended by discussing Darlan. Ours was no exception to the rule. Edmund Taylor admitted to me that the 'temporary expedient' was becoming a 'permanent' one.

'But', he added, 'what could we replace it by?'

It was beyond doubt the triumph of the policy of the *fait accompli*. I remember a remark made to me the day before by X., vice-consul of the United States:

'We can no longer count on the Giraud trick, that is definitely a lost card.'

The Psychological Warfare Section had taken up its offices in the Hôtel de Cornouailles, in the centre of Algiers. It was also the head office of French censorship. Following the disagreeable, yet effectual, methods of the hermit crab, the Allied services soon took over the entire building.

There the discontented came and railed at the state of affairs, journalists aired their complaints, war correspondents sought their scoops.

Colonel Hazeltine was the director of the P.W.S. A pink baby-faced, chubby man. He would often say the most insignificant things with an air of great authority and profound wisdom.

'La vie est dure, Médème.'

And he told me how, considered too old to become a general, he had had his past services recognized and was given a job of great honour indeed, but oh! so difficult to execute. . .

Each day he had to face all the complications of American and French politics, the struggles of the press and of the censorship, the demands of propaganda and the problems brought up by the cohabitation in one service of military and civilians, British and Americans. To instil a war-spirit in his collaborators, he sometimes took them with him in a car, at full-speed, through Algiers, on the nights when bombs came down. That was the bright side to the job.

Colonel Hazeltine had an English officer as assistant, the smiling Colonel Johnson. The rest of the staff was rather cleverly made up of journalists who had knocked about Europe for years. Percy Winner and Edmund Taylor were given the honorary rank of Colonel, the others that of Captain.

The professional curiosity of all these men, always prying into everything, had free scope. They questioned everybody, from the grocer to the lady of the house where they were received; they listened to the complaints of the soldier who happened to be at the same table in the restaurant, to the confidences of the pub owner where they drank glasses of red wine. They did not miss any opportunity of increasing their knowledge, completing their investigations: their work was well done.

In Oran, Bill Garrett, one of their representatives, got into touch with Roger Carcassoné's resistance organization. In Algiers, the men of the Hôtel de Cornouailles did the same with d'Astier's men. They became acquainted with the reports and files dealing with the landing preparations and the ensuing disappointments. The uneasy feeling which had spread over Algiers ceased to be a mystery to them. They began to realize the great psychological mistake which Mr. Robert Murphy had committed when he made use of Darlan and even more, when he kept him in power.

As their eyes opened to the truth, the policy of the Psychological Warfare Section deviated more and more from that of the diplomat, still frequenting only a limited circle of friends. Very soon, owing to force of circumstances, the group of war correspondents and the Office of War Information found itself in total opposition to the representative of the State Department.

It was an unacknowledged, veiled hostility. On the surface, there was complete agreement between the services of the Hôtel St.-Georges and those of the Hôtel de Cornouailles. For the Psychological Warfare Section was not only in charge of spreading information, but had also to deal with propaganda and censorship.

They had to give up fairly quickly any hopes of making propaganda effectual in North Africa. The Algerian, slack and invertebrate, did not react in the usual way to the classical methods of propagandists. Colonel Hazeltine often got excited over this point:

'Your Algerians<sup>1</sup> think only of their stomachs. All they had expected from us were cargoes of food, of merchandise so that they might open their trade again. They wanted American films brought over to divert them and had no intention of re-entering into the war at our side in order to help kick out the Germans and liberate France. But we have other material to bring over in our cargo ships, not films.'

Maybe. But before giving up this raw Algerian material so difficult to mould, one might perhaps have attempted to instil a war-like spirit into a population which had never had it before. At any rate, propaganda in Algiers soon ceased to exist. Already it was felt that the eyes of America were turning towards Italy, France and the occupied countries.

Censorship was another matter. The direction of it was given — what a come-down for a journalist! — to George Rehm, former Paris correspondent of the *Chicago Tribune*. George Rehm, censor, did not become a cog in the machine, but maintained his likes and dislikes—and showed them.

The famous panegyric-interview of Marcel Sauvage with Admiral Darlan landed on his bed at the Hôtel de Cornouailles (which became more and more like the Hôtel du Parc where rooms were called offices). The interview was returned to the weekly paper *Tam*, decorated with big, angry blue pencil marks. Obstinate, Sauvage altered the text and sent it back to George Rehm amidst a heap of other articles. Unfortunately, Rehm rooted it out from under a 'study of Japanese art'. He ruffled up his catlike moustache and saw red:

'If that man Sauvage continues to sabotage the American war effort, he will hear from me! . . . Japanese art, Japanese art . . . What a moment to choose! Anyhow, there is no Japanese art! As to Admiral Darlan, there is no reason whatsoever to give him publicity.'

And so the interview returned once again to its author, ruthlessly cut. Sauvage patiently went through it once more and for the third time sent it to his personal enemy. When he was allowed to publish it, Darlan had been dead for twenty-four hours.

I remember another incident which shows the attitude taken by the press, the censorship and even American military circles:

I had asked John McVane to write an article for this same paper, *Tam*, exposing the views of an American on the France of to-day. John accepted, gave me the text and warned me with a cunning smile:

<sup>1</sup> I firmly insist that they were not mine.

'If a single comma is changed by the censor, I forbid its publication.'

His article was entitled: 'I believe in a new and greater France.'

John McVane, having conceded to the usual cliché that each man has two countries and so on, having reminded readers of Lafayette and of Grasse, entered straight into his subject by praising those 'men who have proved that France has lost a battle but has not lost the war'. He referred to a conversation he had had in London with one whom he discreetly called 'a French leader'. In a hundred and fifty lines, cleverly worded, without once mentioning Fighting France or General de Gaulle by name, he justified the Gaullist movement.

I translated the article. *Tam* accepted it. The American censors — Rehm and Walberg — let it pass with a smile and their blessing. But the French censor almost had an apoplectic fit:

'Gaullism in Algiers! Unthinkable! There can be no question of it. . . .

There was so clearly a question of it that the Office of War Information, set in action, firmly intervened!

'That is an excellent article. In any case, we cannot allow an American journalist to be supervised by you.'

'But it is for a French paper, Sir.'

'That, Sir, is possible, but the author of the article is an American.'

Finally, thoroughly nettled, the American censors demanded that the article be printed. They sought decision at the Hôtel Saint-Georges, but there nobody wanted to take the responsibility of settling so scandalous a question. Step by step, General Eisenhower's own headquarters were reached. By midnight the unfortunate article at last reached the printers, without any modifications, covered by the personal approval of the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Armies.

And so the first article of Gaullist propaganda to appear officially in North Africa was written by an American journalist, covered by American censorship and imposed by the American High Command, all maliciously united in a kind of joint front against Mr. Murphy, whose anti-Gaullist feelings were well known.

Yet Mr. Robert Murphy, undaunted, maintained the same line most rigorously, in spite of general discontent, in spite of the almost open disapproval of his compatriots, in a pernicious atmosphere in which that warlike enthusiasm which might have made all else be forgotten was never born. At any rate Washington approved him and gave him proof of this

approval I will quote from my diary under the date of November 17th

Everybody in Algiers holding an official position or in uniform gathers in the Hôtel Saint-Georges. The crowd is therefore dense. To-day Mr Robert Murphy — who now holds the titles of 'Civil and Diplomatic Councillor of the United States in North Africa' and that of 'President of the Civil Centre of Studies and action of the main headquarters of the United States' as well as that of personal representative of President Roosevelt — is to be decorated with the American Distinguished Service Medal, an outstanding, if not unique, honour for a civilian.

General Dwight Eisenhower personally handed him the medal, good-natured, affable, he embraced him and gave him a friendly pat on the shoulder. The honoured man was so dignified, so unperturbed, that one might almost have believed him to belong to the British Foreign Office. My idea of American diplomats was certainly not that!

Here is the text of the dispatch given by the War Department

Mr Robert Murphy, officer of the Foreign Service of the United States and of the State Department, for distinguished service rendered to the United States in a position of grave responsibility, closely connected with the United States army. He displayed exceptional qualities of leadership, of courage and of keen judgment in extremely perilous circumstances. Moreover, he gave great and vital help when taking part in the negotiations with French authorities in North Africa which led to the cessation of local hostilities.

Little Bernard Metz,<sup>1</sup> unperturbable, whom I met at the end of the ceremony said to me:

"The Distinguished Service Medal given to Robert Murphy officially

<sup>1</sup> Bernard Metz was British vice-consul and the only member of the consulate to remain continuously in Algiers from the time of the Bordeaux Armistice up to the Allied landings. He happened to be on leave at the time when the British consulate hurriedly departed and was forgotten by it, as he was also forgotten by the French police by the sbirros of the Legion by the Axis commissions. With no permit to remain, with no help from his country for two and a half years he faced official anglophobia living from day to day, filling in the most unofficial way imaginable, the post of consul, of secretary, of paymaster, information agent supplying Reuters and co-operating with the United States consulate in the landing preparations. An odd person who lived through a most extraordinary adventure.

sanctions the Darlan policy. You French consider it to be a disgraceful policy. But be patient. Darlan's presence at the critical moment prevented blood being shed, not only French but also American blood . . . We said in the papers during the first days that eight hundred thousand men landed in Africa. When the truth becomes known . . . And besides, without Darlan, we should never have had French West Africa.'

And Bernard Metz, carried away by his own enthusiasm, concluded by saying with conviction:

'Murphy is the greatest diplomat of modern times. After a while you will see the truth of this.'

Let us, therefore, wait for a while. . . .

Completely unperturbed, remaining in ignorance of daily events, Mr. Robert Murphy followed the policy elaborated in Washington. From time to time young men of November 8th who had definitely become Gaullists after the Darlan experience paid him a visit. He received them in his office, in his shirt sleeves. But their everlasting complaints annoyed him. He had other fish to fry:

They said to him: 'We did not risk our lives for such a result as this. . . .'

'We certainly did not work for Darlan. . . .'

' . . . nor to maintain Vichy men in power.'

'The Jews have not been given their rights. The political prisoners have not been freed.'

'The censor forbids our saying that . . .'

Mr. Murphy crossed his arms and shook his head:

'But all that is French internal policy and no business of mine.'

'But, Monsieur le Ministre, don't you think that the Darlan expedient has lasted long enough? Is it not time for General de Gaulle to . . .?'

'No. This is war. One does not change horses crossing a stream. You can see that General Giraud himself has understood this. Things are not going well in Tunisia, this is not the moment to risk riots taking place in the rear. Never fear, one day Giraud will take first place.'

But Giraud was precisely the man the young Gaullists did not wish to see take first place. They said so. They were then told in tones of annoyance:<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Robert Murphy was so annoyed one day by the insistence shown by the objectors, so C. told me, that he said to them, in menacing tones: 'If you continue to be funny by agitating against Darlan, I will have you all put in gaol.'

'You are an insignificant minority. See how many anti-Gaullists there are in Algiers. I emphasize the fact that I want no trouble behind the lines. That is our policy. Our policy is to conduct the war under the best possible conditions. Everything else is French policy and will be settled after victory is won.'

The young men went away thinking that these were excellent methods as long as they did not lead to putting Darlan in power. They announced this in the Hôtel de Cornouailles where people were beginning to worry about the wave of unpopularity which swept over the Admiral.

It was the time when the walls of Algiers became mysteriously covered with subversive posters. Every night the young men of the putsch, consumed by inaction, went through the streets of the town with pots of glue, paints and brushes. On December 8th, however, they committed a tactical error: they set to work before midnight. Midnight was the time when the American Military Police took over from the French in Algiers, and impunity began. For why should the American police not survey with a kindly eye young people who plastered the walls with as many posters 'Vive Roosevelt' as 'Down with Darlan'?

At any rate, on December 8th, twenty-two young men were arrested by the police. The head of the police — by a curious irony — was Henri d'Astier. Those on whom clandestine leaflets were found were immediately arrested. The others were told to present themselves at the police station on the following day. They went, somewhat naively, to hear themselves being accused of 'plotting against the safety of the State'. It was ludicrous, but the accusation was sufficient to have them sent forthwith to the Barberousse Prison.

Four of them appealed to American protection. As they were under no illusion as to the answer they would get from the Saint-Georges, they went straight to the Psychological Warfare Section where Edmund Taylor received them, rather worried by the whole affair. He would have liked to get them out of this tight corner, for, after all, all things considered, 'Vive Roosevelt' was not a seditious cry. But how could a double incident with the French authorities and with Mr. Robert Murphy be avoided?

Edmund Taylor suddenly had a great idea (not entirely an original one, for Gribouille<sup>1</sup> had had it before him): in order to avoid his protégés being

<sup>1</sup> Gribouille is a popular type of French simpleton.

arrested by Darlan's police, he had them put into prison himself, but into an American prison. The young men, delighted with the idea, agreed wholeheartedly!'

Although the matter was carefully hushed up following the usual Vichy methods, it got talked about. Denis C. expressed widespread feeling when he said to me:

'American High Command allows young men who write on the walls 'Vive the Republic', 'Vive de Gaulle' or 'Down with Darlan' to be imprisoned. Eisenhower makes no move. Murphy only acts as Pontius Pilate. This is serious, because these men believed in Roosevelt's word when he promised them 'liberty of expression' and 'freedom from fear'. There is, then, no connection between the President's promises and the behaviour of his representatives. And for having written these very words these same young people would, a month ago, have been put into prison in the same way, but prison under German control. Nothing had changed. . . .

This was not quite true, for finally some five hundred suspects were arrested — out-and-out partisans of Vichy, S.O.L., heads of the Legion, ex-dealers with the enemy. But, for the most part, they were not arrested either by the military or by French authorities, or on Mr. Murphy's demand. In this amazing musical-comedy being played in December 1942, it was the journalists of the Psychological Warfare Service who became the instruments of justice!

As nobody else acted, they did.

Thus, sometimes, one would see two men ringing at the door of a well-known traitor, and ordering peremptorily:

'Follow us, immediately!'

The man called upon might accept or refuse, it really made no difference. Five minutes later, he was inevitably seen coming out, surrounded by guards, in the best gangster style. A car, chauffeur at the wheel, was waiting near the pavement:

'As usual, boss?'

'As usual, Musca.'

In the Barberousse prison, the gaolers were also beginning to get the hang of things. At first they would have liked 'these gentlemen to be so kind as to show the warrant for the arrest'; but now they always had a cell available.



And so, among others, the leader of the Legion, Breuleux Marquand, leader of the Algiers, S.O.L., and his assistant Cavalli; Guittard of the Parti Populaire Français, head of the Press Department of the Information; Canavaggio, Chatel's dummy<sup>1</sup>; Pierre-Louis Ganne, pro-German journalist, president of the group 'Collaboration', disappeared from circulation. This wholesome sweep due to private initiative could only have taken place during the chaos of the first weeks. Mr. Robert Murphy remained faithful to his official line of behaviour; he did not approve. Moreover, one of the main 'lovers of justice' was to be asked to leave Algiers, whereas men like Pierre-Louis Ganne and Quittard came back into circulation, more conceited than ever and even more filled with hatred towards the Allies after their stay in prison.

At that time Mr. Robert Murphy's main subject for concern was fear lest he be accused of meddling in French affairs. These honourable qualms, following on the daring initiative taken by him during the first days, were carried so far that, in order to avoid unpleasant incidents, he tolerated manoeuvres of obviously anti-Allied and pro-Axis leanings. The undeniable honesty of the State Department's representative was not a trump card in his favour when the opposer happened to be, for instance, a General Nogues.

Jay Allan came to Algiers for the sole purpose of saying this. Jay Allan, Moroccan representative of the Office of War Information was a jovial fellow whose career had not been devoid of adventure. Before the war he had been one of the best American correspondents in Europe. Since the beginning of hostilities, he had known German occupation in France and had even spent a few months in a Gestapo prison. His book, *My Trouble with Hitler*, was a great success.

Jay Allan, in Algiers, complained of the difficulties he encountered in his contacts with the Residence. He was systematically refused permission to use Radio-Maroc for Allied propaganda broadcasts.

A Psychological Warfare Section delegation with the very representative Colonel Hazeltine at its head accompanied by tall Edmund Taylor, ex-correspondent of the Paris edition of the *Chicago Tribune*, and short Percy Winner, ex-representative of American agencies in Rome and

<sup>1</sup> I have already told of the clever labour organization which consisted in Canavaggio having thousands of Algerian lambs frozen and exported to Spain whilst the Governor General, Chatel, decreed that the meat ration per week for the country was to be three and a half ounces.

Berlin, left for Rabat — at Jay Allan's request — in order to try and convince Nogues. But things had by then reached such a pitch that the officials of an American Government Office for Propaganda after 'occupying' North Africa, were obliged to consider the possibility, if Nogues refused his consent, of having to install a clandestine broadcast station in order to talk to France. To say the least of it, this was unexpected!

'If Nogues maintains his veto and if Darlan does not intervene', Edmund Taylor admitted to me, 'we shall have to abandon the idea of Radio-Rabat. As to the Algiers' broadcasting station, it is thick with people placed there by Vichy. We have only one other solution: illegality, for we have no real power and cannot count on Mr. Robert Murphy to exercise any pressure on the French authorities. We might have to consider Tangier. . . .'

A few days later they returned from Morocco, sick at heart, their heads full of plans for preventive measures, and with devastating reports. Edmund Taylor again did not hide his feelings:

'A clean sweep, a completely clean sweep, that is what we need. The Legion is born again, it is recruiting, sabotaging, all under the aegis and with the encouragement of Nogues!'

Percy Winner handed me a copy of the Casablanca paper *La Voix Française*, supported by Nogues, rabidly anti-Jewish. He pointed out the leader which was plainly entitled: 'I hate democracies. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

'That is the point we have reached after weeks of "loyal co-operation in the pursuit of common aims"', bitterly commented Edmund Taylor. 'As to the author of this pamphlet, a certain Boutang, I will have him put into prison!'

Hell, too, is paved with good intentions. Three weeks later, Pierre Boutang having been appointed Jean Rigault's chef de cabinet arrived in Algiers, in possession of official permits and priorities, on board an American plane.

But the members of the Psychological Warfare Section brought back information about more serious matters. They had obtained proof that Nogues, since November 8th, had ceaselessly assisted French officers

<sup>1</sup> I emphasize once more, so that there be no mistake, that all this took place at the end of November, three weeks after the 'liberation' of North Africa by the democracies mentioned in it. French censorship had allowed the article to pass. The Americans, however, demanded that measures be taken and the paper was suspended ten days later.

to leave for Vichy, first in French 'planes, thus removing them from the Allies, then by helping them to reach Tangier by rail and thence to get to Spain. They also had material proof of General Nogues' treachery, Nogues who continuously assured Laval of his devotion and kept him supplied with political and military information through the Spanish diplomatic bag, controlled by the Axis, and through the intermediary of Pietri, Vichy Ambassador in Madrid.

As the height of impudence, when Colonels Hazeltine, Taylor and Winner were paying a visit to the Residence, Nogues asked them whether they could not guarantee the clandestine passage from France to North Africa of 'excellent French officers wishing to fight against Germany'. It is to be presumed that he was not thinking of those he sent daily in the opposite direction.

All this — and much besides — was contained in a lengthy report sent to Mr. Robert Murphy. There is no doubt but that the diplomat took careful note of this as he did of any report sent in by the Psychological Warfare Section. He must also have realized, at that time, how the feeling of uneasiness was growing in North Africa. He was, however, content to remain the faithful instrument of a policy, even when events proved it to be out of date. But a policy of tolerance and good-will cannot be carried out when confronted by men of ill-will.

And so the P.W.S. reports were first carefully examined and then equally carefully placed in the consulate strong-boxes, no notice being taken of them. Moreover, as the American diplomatic bag still proved to be full to overflowing, when the representatives of the O.W.I. wished to correspond directly with the President, the P.W.S. decided to send one of their men to Washington to explain, in person, to the White House that the situation in Africa was not so crystal clear as the State Department imagined.

So Percy Winner boarded the 'plane for Dakar, Natal and the United States. 'If all goes well', he said, when embarking, 'with the information I take with me to Washington, I will have Darlan's head.'

We shall never know more about that, for when Percy Winner reached Washington, Darlan had been assassinated.

Even Robert Murphy's entourage felt that the situation was becoming unbearable. John Knox grudgingly admitted as much to me when we met at the house of some friends:

'It is absurd to make so much fuss about Darlan. Never fear, when the time comes, his retreat will be as cushy as possible, But why this hurry, damn it all . . .'

In point of fact, tied up by its policy, the State Department tried in vain to find a legal means of setting straight a situation so badly embarked on, whilst maintaining the fiction of national sovereignty with which Darlan had crowned himself. The situation was inextricable if normal procedure was followed. It would have been necessary to use a surgeon's knife and cut to the quick, putting one's trust in the patient's healthy constitution. But Mr. Robert Murphy acted as a surgeon to whom is brought a man dying from a tumour of the brain and who is satisfied with giving him some aspirin on the ground that his family have not given their consent to an operation.

Yet, though he did not intervene, Mr. Roosevelt's representative kept a close watch on events. When General d'Astier de la Vigerie came to Africa in order to make certain contacts, it was in Major Dostert's car — Major Dostert<sup>1</sup> was then military attaché to Robert Murphy's War Cabinet<sup>2</sup> — that the unofficial envoy of General de Gaulle toured Algeria. Truly the situation could not have been more closely followed, and Mr. Robert Murphy was certainly aware that one evening an Admiralty car had driven to General d'Astier's and set down a square-built, squat man with only the pipe missing in order to make him a familiar, not to say popular, figure. Nevertheless, the passive policy of the civil and diplomatic Counsellor of the United States was to be upset by events and human beings. On December 24th, Darlan died.

I have previously told how I chanced to be in the Hôtel de Cornouailles when the news was learnt. A 'prisoner' of the Americans, I was dining on that Christmas Eve with Colonels Hazeltine and Johnson, with George Rehm and Edmund Taylor. Few tears were spilt over the victim during the dinner. As details kept coming in concerning the murder, the general

<sup>1</sup> Major Dostert — to-day Colonel Dostert — was specially attached to the liaison between General Giraud and the American authorities. He was delegated as liaison officer and official interpreter to General Giraud whom he greeted in Gibraltar on November 7th. When Colonel Dostert finds it desirable and possible to publish his memoirs, on the Giraud-Eisenhower, Giraud-Murphy, Giraud-Darlan interviews, on those of Casablanca and on General Giraud's visit to Washington in July 1943, they will contribute greatly to the history of those troubled months.

<sup>2</sup> Together with Colonel John Keveney, Lieutenant-Colonels Bernard Bernstein (who played mainly an economic role), Roland Murphy and Will Gordon.

impression gathered was that the murder of Darlan, which seemed at first a happy solution, in fact, settled nothing. A man's disappearance does not mean the transformation of a political idea. On the contrary, to profit by the murder in order to make a radical change of policy would mean admitting that a mistake had been committed and so approving the act itself. One could not disown a man, dead, whom one had ceaselessly upheld against everybody when he was alive. The State Department was now immobilized in the 'Darlan policy', which they might have reconsidered in the Admiral's lifetime.

Late that evening, Edmund Taylor went to the Hôtel Saint-Georges. He saw Mr. Robert Murphy who was 'very perturbed'.

When he returned, I heard one of his assistants draw the following conclusions which greatly impressed me:

'Murphy deliberately kept his eyes closed to avoid seeing Darlan's growing unpopularity. He was the ultimate cause of this assassination. Now the temporary expedient is made permanent by the murder and the United States will never be able to prove their good faith'.

The events of subsequent days aroused some bitter feeling towards Mr. Robert Murphy. It was certainly true that Darlan's murder had settled nothing!

I have said how the unfortunate Bonnier de la Chapelle was 'judged'. It was to be foreseen that he would get his sentence, since they refused to give him a political trial to which he would have been entitled under any democratic régime. But mercy might have been granted him by the Imperial Council. Neither Chatel nor Nogues nor Boisson would have opposed. This mercy was refused by General Giraud: to grant it would have been a direct defiance of President Roosevelt who had qualified the assassination as 'murder of the first degree' and had asked that the murderer be punished. So Bonnier was to perish and death, which could not make of Darlan a victim, made of the man who had struck him down a martyr.

A second decisive intervention from President Roosevelt placed Giraud in power. Mr. Robert Murphy, after having suggested the Comte de Paris, upheld Giraud and imposed him on the members of the Imperial Council. This intervention from the President took the form of a telegram urging the diplomat to act.

The Secretary of Political Affairs, Jean Rigault, told how Mr. Robert

Murphy had pushed the telegram in front of his eyes, and that the text was: 'With Giraud alone, everything.' I have no direct confirmation of this text.

What is certain, at any rate, is that General Giraud's election was organized by Mr. Robert Murphy in masterly fashion, without forcing him out of the shadow, for 'he did not wish to get mixed up in French internal policy'.

The General's coming to power was no surprise. The United States were keeping, with a delay of a month and a half, the promises made to him before the landing. But once more — and this time the need to spare American and French blood no longer held good — General de Gaulle's name had been omitted in the most natural way: it was not even mentioned.

Once more there was an undercurrent of conflict in American circles. It found expression at the time of the arrests on December 30th. I have already said that twelve men were arrested and deported towards the south, to the borders of the Sahara. They had all collaborated in the landing, had prepared it for months, supplying Mr. Robert Murphy with information and plans, risking daily being faced with a court martial and an execution squad, accused of high treason. They were now being accused of having made an attempt on the life of the United States Minister. It was a defiance of justice, and every American in Algiers knew it.

Jean Rigault openly admitted this when talking to Mr. Robert Murphy:

'Yes, it is a legal error, a voluntary legal error. I am not having them imprisoned, but "administratively interned". They can be released at a day's notice, as soon as the danger of riots is over. It is in our common interest that the matter be kept silent. Only the maintenance of order counts.'

And Jean Rigault aptly reminded Robert Murphy of a word of Goethe's: 'Better an injustice than an uprising.'

Mr. Robert Murphy bowed to events: he let matters slide without going too deep into them, but he did want to put an end to the story that the arrests had been made to ensure his personal safety. When General Giraud had spoken to him on this subject, he had not presented the matter in that light. It was too late; New York and London had already read the morning papers.

Meanwhile, friends of the twelve accused men were running around Algiers demanding justice. They sought American protection as the only path open to them. Their good faith was undeniable, the injustice flagrant. When these arrests were learnt in the Hôtel de Cornouailles it was not for one moment believed that the United States would tolerate and even go so far as to shield the operation led by General Bergeret, a Vichyist only yesterday.

The twelve men had been placed in a convoy of cars which was to take them south, via Blida. Immediately, from the Hôtel de Cornouailles, Edmund Taylor gave instructions to the American Colonel commanding the sector. In the middle of the night troops were warned of the danger. It was an incredible yet authentic scene. Lorries barred the roads, men were posted even in the gutters. A barricade, nearly a mile deep, was established to examine all cars. But it was too late, the convoy had gone through. Only the last car was stopped. In it were Pierre Alexandre and René Moatti. The militia men watched them carefully, convinced that they were German spies.

Stately American Military Police stopped the car as it entered Blida, accompanied by the police superintendent who watched them unmoved.

'Your lamps are not in accordance with regulations. They give too much light.'

Without waiting for a reply, they took the whole crowd to the police station where the militia men, in their turn, were closely watched. They were accused of 'not being provided with orders for the transfer of prisoners'. The American commanding officer received Alexandre and Moatti very courteously. The Mayor of Blida, who chanced to be a Gaullist, had their handcuffs removed and they were given permission to telephone.

Alexandre leapt to the instrument:

'Give me Algiers 372.02'.

On the other end of the wire, Edmund Taylor spoke in a soothing tone of voice:

'Don't worry. Mr. Robert Murphy will not allow the United States to be mixed up in this matter. I will tell him at once what is happening. Under no pretext leave the place where you are now. You are on American territory: the French police can do nothing against you. The consulate will also act in order to have the other ten freed. . . .'

So the two prisoners patiently waited to be released. They were under the personal protection of the American commanding officer. They were his guests at the Blida aerodrome where they spent the day. The town was in a state of siege: British detachments had brought automatic guns to firing position on the roofs. During the whole of the 30th, telephonic conversations became more and more frequent between American military authorities in Algiers and in Blida. In the meantime, the unfortunate militia men, completely fogged, were having their meals each under the supervision of an American soldier, machine-gun in hand.

Hours went by. In Algiers Edmund Taylor had called Robert Murphy on the direct line which linked his room and the American headquarters. In a few words he exposed the situation to the diplomat: surely he was not going to allow these men who had been his faithful collaborators during the most difficult period to be arrested, under pretext that they had designs on his life?

Mr. Robert Murphy, fully informed, demanded a few moments of deliberation. When he called Colonel Taylor again, it was to tell him that he was sorry, but he could not interfere in an essentially French question, where Frenchmen alone were concerned. He had telephoned Blida giving instructions. The prisoners had been handed over to their guards. In fact on the 31st, at 6.30, Alexandre and Moatti were again handed over to the militia men.

Edmund Taylor could not believe that he was hearing correctly and hung up the receiver.

During the days following Christmas, Algiers was in a permanent state of turmoil and agitation. American circles were as much divided as the French. The anti-Gaullist incident which had just occurred disturbed French patriots — they saw the Vichy reaction in it only too clearly — as much as it disturbed the group of Americans in touch with French public opinion and aware of the coming decline in their prestige. Nobody knew what the morrow would bring and Mr. Robert Murphy's entourage vainly sought reassurance that they were on the right path in their conviction that they had faithfully obeyed diplomatic instructions from Washington.

On December 30th, I remember meeting X., an American diplomat, loosely connected with the United States Minister, who spent some five



minutes justifying, with a most undiplomatic passion, the policy of non-intervention followed by the consulate.

Mr. Robert Murphy's first and foremost concern in the circumstances, as he told me was 'that he should not be suspected of interference with French internal politics'.

This was only too well known indeed, but sometimes to abstain from interference is more significant and compromising than the most brutal intervention. And is it quite certain that if a movement in the opposite direction had taken place, if Gaullists had taken action in Algiers and put into prison Frenchmen guilty of having come to terms with Germany, Mr. Robert Murphy would have let them do as they wished, withdrawing as usual to his role of Pontius Pilate?

Everybody felt the vital importance of these incidents, in themselves small and revolving round unimportant people, but which showed to all watchful Frenchmen and to all those who were waiting for liberation through American force what the policy of Washington would be, regarding the Quislings of the old world and the exiled governments.

A few extracts from my diary of December 31st will show the state of-affairs during those days:

I went to the Hôtel de Cornouailles this morning. Round each of the plush-covered sofas in the hall, groups had gathered, whispering, throwing furtive glances at the passers-by. The first man I saw was Jean Castet; one never knows whether he is there as official spokesman of the broadcasting station or as editor of the clandestine paper. As I knew that Professor Capitant, head of the movement 'Combat' was being hunted by the police, I asked Castet: 'What about you?' 'Not yet. But maybe to-morrow or straight away on leaving here.' I found the same optimistic view shared by Philippe Soupault. He had been trying to meet me for the past two days to arrange a broadcast. He rushed up to me and we settled to do it on the following day: 'If I am not arrested by then,' he specified with a smile. 'Or been mobilized like Joxe.'

Henri d'Astier was there, having definitely lost his composure, Collingwood and McVane lacked their usual smile, and Bernard Karsenty who had escaped from the French police and refused to

leave the building. The Abbé Cordier, in lieutenant's uniform<sup>1</sup> discreetly flitted past. . . .

There was a constant coming and going: the telephonist at the reception desk was on the verge of hysterics: 'Mr. Walberg is in conference. And Mr. Rehm, and Mr. Galsworthy, too. And Mr. Taylor. I cannot disturb them. It is urgent! But, Sir, everybody to-day has urgent information to give.'

The unfortunate fellow who is probably awaited at the door by the police huddles up in a corner of the hall, hoping that a possible saviour might pass.

Louis Joxe, in Air Force uniform, came down from the other side of the horse-shoe shaped staircase. Yesterday he was still director of the broadcasting station. He was taking leave of Colonel Hazel-tine, whom I stopped as he passed:

'La vie est dure, Madame. And to think that I might be at the front . . . This is all Mr. Murphy's fault. Still, come and dine with us to-night. . . .'

I called again at six o'clock that afternoon. Edmund Taylor was ill and remained in his room, but this room looked like a public square. Peter Tomkins, the Irish Major Lane Lee, were making their report. And when the doctor came to examine his patient, he could not help telling me that his uncle, Doctor Morali, was on the list of those to be arrested.

Taking advantage of five minutes of comparative calm, I put to Edmund Taylor the question which was harassing the whole town: 'How is it possible that Vichyites have had Gaullists put in prison, with the support of American authorities?'

'I cannot understand it either,' he answered. 'And a great many Americans are in the same quandary. The truth is that Murphy is applying his personal policy, but in the minds of the French people it is the "Americans" who are responsible for it. I have no personal bone to pick with Murphy, he is a friend of mine. But I cannot help saying that he is placing our prestige in the balance. As all those who have been arrested were working for him, for us, before the landing,

<sup>1</sup> The Abbé Cordier was arrested ten days later for complicity in the murder of Admiral Darlan.

people now say: "When they have finished with their friends, when they have used them like a lemon squeezed dry, they have them put in prison and so get rid of them." That is what is being said of the United States to-day in North Africa, to-morrow it will be repeated in France, in Belgium, in Holland, in Greece, in Norway. It is a disaster.' 'Could you have them freed?'

'Now that they have been imprisoned in a camp, it will take a long time before we can succeed. We are completely helpless. It is incredible: we are the only ones who have got into close touch with public opinion in North Africa, who have spoken to the man-in-the-street, to the people, who know what is the *real* attitude of the masses and not of high society only towards the United States, the war, even the future, and we cannot make it known in Washington! Yet our organization was created for that very purpose! To return back home? I have thought of that, but there would certainly not be room in a 'plane for me in the present circumstances.'

I did not realize until then how deep was the opposition in American circles to Robert Murphy and the State Department. Twice during this conversation the direct line of the American headquarters had rung: twice Edmund Taylor had refused to speak to Robert Murphy. And everybody heartily approved when George Rehm told us how he had had to spend the night in town because he had given up his room in the Hôtel de Cornouailles to two Gaullists being searched for by the police and to whom he had given shelter.

Yet the Hôtel de Cornouailles was not a haunt for outlaws. It was the seat of one of the most official organizations of the American army then in action. To-day, in this centre of opposition and conspiracy, General Terry Allan, commanding the First American Army on the Tunisian front arrived quite casually, accompanied by his old friend, Colonel Hazeltine. 'The best soldier in the American army, Médème' — Hazeltine tells me. He was accompanied by Colonel Harry Flint.

We drank whisky in Edmund Taylor's tooth glasses, all the while continuing to provoke sedition. Suddenly, by an association of ideas, General Terry Allan remembered that he was dining at the Saint-Georges with General Eisenhower. He will certainly be able to supply matter for conversation. . . .

On this New Year's Eve, Colonel Hazeltine had organized a big dinner for all members of his 'household' — the Office of War Information and Psychological Warfare Section — journalists, war correspondents and a few outside guests. In all some eighty people, Americans, British and a few French, all mixed in a friendly manner. The mess tables were placed side by side. Everything had been seen to, there was even an orchestra.

The evening was a merry one. On the first stroke of midnight all the guns in Algiers went off, the machine-guns fired a round, multi-coloured rockets burst from the near-by slopes. The white town was lit up by converging tracer bullets of the anti-aircraft units and all the sirens of the ships in the port simultaneously broke the silence of the night. It was a grand spectacle.<sup>1</sup> And through this infernal noise, in all the streets, in all the squares, from all the windows, suddenly open, came the nostalgic air of 'Auld Lang Syne' which was certainly heard for the first time on New Year's Eve in Algeria.

One of the Englishmen in our party had started playing the accordion. One after another we sang the old songs of the United States, of Great Britain and of France. Colonel Hall, an American, broke into 'La Madelon' with an accent which did not take away its charm. . . . We were far from the day's plotting and scheming, far from its deep dissensions. Yet not so far as I imagined. For, when we went to 'have one for the road' at George Rehm's — having sung the Marseillaise in chorus with the whole assembly — Collingwood, Tomkins, Walberg and I came across a man settled in Rehm's own rooms, in pyjamas, who introduced himself in the most polite, although rather embarrassed, manner:

'Lieutenant . . . Lieutenant O'Brian, journalist.'

I shook hands with Lieutenant O'Brian and George finished the introduction as though this was quite usual:

'Lieutenant O'Brian has, like so many of us, had a spot of bother recently. I preferred putting him up here where no one will come and haul him out.'

And so, in a friendly truce of illegality, we began the year 1943 in Algiers.

<sup>1</sup> Several Algerians admitted to me next day, somewhat naively, that, terrified by the noise and relieving it to be a dreadful bombardment, they had spent the rest of the night in their cellars.

I have quoted a long passage from my diary. It seems to me to give a spirit then reigning in Algiers, it shows the ever-widening gap between groups of Frenchmen, of British, of Americans. The character of it is barely discernible, but already one could guess, through the stubborn opposition and perhaps because of it, the strong urge of the liberation movement which would sweep away, without any hope of resistance, all the puppets to whom Mr. Murphy and the State Department have given so much attention. So would disappear one by one Chatel, Bergeret, Nogues, Boisson, Mendigal, Michelier, Temple and twenty others without anyone being the worse for it.

And Mr. Robert Murphy, in his violent self-defence, soon became the instrument that merged the Gaullist cause with that of all patriots fighting with all their might to rid themselves of Vichy. Without intending to do so, he associated himself in his fight against the Gaullists with everything in Algiers which represented the survival of a dishonoured régime. The more the systematic opposition of the State Department towards Gaullism grew, the more did the Gaullist movement itself gain in power. Mr. Robert Murphy was not erecting a wall in front of General de Gaulle's supporters, he was placing a spring-board under their feet.

It is a fact, that Gaullism was not of much importance during 1941 and 1942 in North Africa and that the number of men who received their orders from the Free French circles in London was very restricted. But Admiral Darlan, put into power and maintained there by American bayonets, did more for Gaullism than the most devoted propagandist of the movement. When the arrests, executed under the protection of General Bergeret's name, received tacit approval and acceptance, a great many patriots who, up till then, had not believed in de Gaulle, were definitely thrown into Gaullism, because they felt that otherwise by opposing him they would become too identified with the collaborators of yesterday and were determined to escape that fate.

How blind American diplomatic circles were at that time. They did not understand that the game was won for the party which would set about its elections by sticking on the walls in France: 'If you want to vote as Laval, de Brinon, Doriot and Déat would have done, vote against de Gaulle!'

Mr. Robert Murphy's position was undoubtedly difficult. This honest man, a true lover of France, sincerely desirous of applying to the end a

icy he had helped to build up, saw his friends turn away from him. I felt resentment grow against him. Though he had little contact with the masses, he could not but feel the growing hostility in patriot circles and the desperate frenzy with which the Allies' enemies of yesterday clung to his protection. He could not but feel the irresistible drive of Gaullism, nor fail to understand that he had closed the gates on himself.

A few incidents were particularly painful to him. One day, Jacques Tessier, whose villa had been used for the Chercell conversations, asked to see the diplomat.

He said to him: 'Here is a list giving the names and addresses of all our friends, of all those who worked for you for a year, who risked prison and execution. It will simplify your task . . . Now have us all arrested.'

Another day old Doctor Aboulker's daughter knocked on his door and made the following slighting remark:

'I am returning your umbrella and your hat which you forgot at our house on November 8th. Will you return our men. . . .'<sup>1</sup>

These were uncomfortable moments. The Gaullists in Algiers saw only the bald fact that Robert Murphy did nothing to prevent his former collaborators being arrested.

But this was only one aspect of the situation. The problem was not so simple. The arrests had placed the United States Minister before a dilemma: either to intervene by enforcing the American action of Blida and so suspend the execution of the sentence — officially ordered, let us not forget, by General Giraud — making in that way an enemy of the High Commissioner and for the sake of a dozen conspirators to risk creating diplomatic complications for the American Government, or to allow those men, most probably innocent and his former 'accomplices', to be arrested, hoping that the trial would prove them not guilty. This second solution definitely severed him from the Gaullists of Algiers and placed him once and for all in an attitude of opposition to General de Gaulle. The whole conflict which ensued between the two generals was foreshadowed by this event.

It is obvious that before such an alternative, the diplomat had no choice but to choose Giraud and the solution of ingratitude. This choice

<sup>1</sup> The diplomat had, indeed, found shelter on the night of the landing at the house of Doctor Aboulker, who had been arrested with his son José and his nephew Raphael.

was indeed more important than the arrests or the personalities of a Bergeret or a Rigault.

It was the entire problem of American policy towards French power in North Africa which was in question and this State reason justified Mr. Robert Murphy before his own conscience.

His last scruples showed themselves — and this is an amazing detail — when he sent one of his vice-consuls, John Boyd, on January 10th, to the camp at Laghouat where the twelve unfortunate men were stagnating in dreadful conditions both of hygiene and food. He brought them soap, tobacco and a few kind words from the man they were accused of having attempted to murder, crime for which they had been arrested.

Professor Aboulker spoke in the name of the prisoners. He spoke, as he put it 'as to the first person from the outside world from whom I can request the right to be questioned'.

'We want to be heard', added Professor Aboulker. 'We are no longer living in the times of King's seals and dungeons. I do not speak to you as American consul . . . No, I certainly do not speak to you as to an American, for we had not expected such treatment from Americans. . . .'

John Boyd who, for nearly a year, had worked with the people he was now facing, for the realization of a landing by his people, left Laghouat profoundly moved, his eyes filled with tears. . . .

Weeks went by. The ridiculous accusation was abandoned: Henri d'Astier was arrested without any difficulty, as his friends had already been roped in. From then on they were kept only as 'witnesses'. There was a 'subtle difference'. . . .

Towards the end of January, Mr. Robert Murphy put in a demand to Rigault. What was becoming of the twelve 'witnesses' in the trial which never opened?

'They will be released in a week,' Rigault replied, shrugging his shoulders.

A fortnight went by. The 'witnesses' were still behind prison bars. It was my friend John Boyd, who reminded Jean Rigault of his promise. I met him as he came out of the office of the 'Secretary of Political Affairs', boiling with indignation.

'It is sheer folly,' he told me. 'He has promised to have them released. To-day he told me, quite insolently: "Oh, has it not yet been done? It must have been overlooked." He is fooling us. . . .'

It was time Mr. Robert Murphy realized this!

At last, in February, the twelve men were set free. And Mr. Robert Murphy, heedless of the danger he ran in meeting such sinister-minded men, invited two of them that very day to dine with him, namely José Aboulker and Pierre Alexandre. On their request, he wrote out the following testimonial for them:

I am happy to testify to the French patriotic faith which inspired these young people to devote themselves to the Allied cause. I am convinced they will not regret the part they so courageously and so disinterestedly played in the events of November 8th, which were to bring about the liberation of their country and the defeat of the Axis.

Having this excellent document in their possession, and in order to be quite sure that they should not regret the part they played 'so courageously and disinterestedly' on November 8th, Pierre Alexandre and José Aboulker took ship which brought them, safe and sound, 'to the free land of Britain where, amongst the four great freedoms, ruled the freedom from fear'.

With the release of these men from prison I end my personal testimonial on the American conflict between the State Department and the Office of War Information such as I witnessed it, emerging and growing in that ferment which was Algiers. Without going back on those events which started it, I believe that one of the principal causes of this conflict was the entirely different conception of the sources of information to be gathered from both sides of the barricade. The Office of War Information — and even more the Psychological Warfare Section were ardent fanatics of red-hot information from the people, following the Gallup method. I have already told how the complaints of the grocer, the hopes of the housewife in the market, the grumbles of the journalist returning from the censorship office, the confidences of the man eating at the same table in the pub were listened to with eagerness by the representatives of both organizations.

They were close to the masses. Mr. Robert Murphy did not deign to approach them. He considered that 'quality' had more weight as far as information went than the opinion of the man in the street. Restricted to a small circle of acquaintances, surrounded by his usual collaborators, he left them only to visit his customary hosts, to have tea with the Princesse



de Ligne, to dine with M. Lemaigre-Dubreuil or with Mme Hesnault. To a Frenchwoman it is a miracle that Mr. R. Murphy should have succeeded in recreating in Algiers, for his own personal benefit and instruction, a replica of the Faubourg Saint Germain. Are there still diplomats left who believe that the 'Faubourg Saint Germain' is a true reflection of the present face of our unfortunate country?

If I have dealt at such length with these conflicts, these arrests, it is not because I for one moment imagine that history will attach great importance to them. A few men thrown into a concentration camp? Merely an act of authority of a few against a few. This is neither new nor astonishing nowadays.

Their names, their personal character, their activities and their adventures, the complications created by their case would not present much interest were it not that they were the illustration and the logical conclusion of a wider policy, its unavoidable epilogue.

If on December 30th, 1942 Mr. Robert Murphy found himself placed before the alternatives of covering a denial of justice and allowing his personal friends to be imprisoned or of opposing the very power which he had helped set up, it was because he himself was the prisoner of this absurd dilemma. All that could be said against those Gaullists whom he had to fight with, was that they created a disturbance, for I put aside the stupid accusation of murderous intent. This disturbance was born and existed only because of Darlan, of his accession to power, of the credit given him, of his assassination, of the execution of his murderer. And who established Darlan in power, if not Robert Murphy himself?

And so we come back, and always will come back, to the same root of the question, namely the immoral use to which the Admiral was put. But here again we must dare to push ahead, to probe deeper into the facts, behind the apparent events.

It certainly seemed that military necessity made Darlan the perfect palliative of those dangers which were only too visible to the meagre landing forces of the Allies. Certainly his presence—whether expected or not—could provoke a revision of established plans and justify hasty improvisation.

Mr. Robert Murphy and the American authorities counted on General Giraud, and his absence justified some confusion at the time of the landing.

But once again, and by a curious twist of fate, from whichever side one considers events, they have always occurred because they were provoked. If General Giraud was not there at the prescribed time, he was not the only one to bear the responsibility: Mr. Robert Murphy encouraged him, either actively or tacitly, in his hopes which never for a single moment tallied with the intentions of the American High Commissioner. Up till November 7th, General Giraud was taken in by the implicit promises contained in Mr. Robert Murphy's messages, messages which refused nothing, encouraged everything.

And if Mr. Robert Murphy deemed it expedient to make proposals to Admiral Darlan, in spite of the promises of the United States given to General Giraud and before his absence could have provoked changes in the established plans, it was because he had placed himself under the necessity of failing his word, in the same way as he placed himself, two months later, under the necessity of renouncing his links of friendship because there was no other way open to him.

The gambler, too, feels compelled to throw his last counters on to the green cloth to regain what he has previously lost. It is what is called running after one's stakes. The loss of the last counters is not an isolated accident, it is the result of playing double or quits.

In the same way the deplorable reign of Darlan and the events surrounding it were incidents, unfortunate it is true, but which could have been foreseen, taking a long view of the game played by the State Department with France.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> British policy in North Africa was more subtle, more delicate, more sensitive to the reactions of public opinion. This public opinion was conscious of it, gave it interpretation and expression. This was most beneficial to British prestige, so seriously shattered since 1940. Only a few weeks after Mr. Harold MacMillan's arrival in Algiers, this is how, in Gaullist circles in North Africa, the policy of the State Department was compared to that of the Foreign Office: I quote for reference a 'confidential directive' distributed in Algiers for the members of the Gaullist movement 'Combat':

'American position.

The American attitude can thus be summarized:

(a) We think of de Gaulle and Giraud only as soldiers likely to help us in our fight against the Axis. We are with them and recognize their authority only for the duration of the war. Afterwards, we will personally see to it that the French people freely choose their own form of government.

(b) North Africa is not France. It in no way reflects the political desires of France.

(c) Consequently, there must not be in Algiers any provisional government presuming to represent France.

(d) An agreement between de Gaulle and Giraud is to be hoped for as it would co-ordinate all French forces of the Empire. But this must be a purely military agreement. [*cont'd.* p. 254

The justification of Darlan is the justification of the maintenance of the United States diplomatic representatives at Vichy, after the Bordeaux armistice, after Montoire, after Pearl Harbour: it is a policy of realism, a window open over Europe, of informing agents in semi-occupied countries, of continued contact with the French people Perhaps . .

President Roosevelt has said that the people of France will freely choose their government after the war, respecting democratic principles And, in the long run, they did it. Meanwhile, the United States were going to deal with the power which presented the most legal appearance The Pétain government seemed to fulfil this demand from the juridical point of view. Also, more complex elements, some aspects of its internal policy — namely the anti-communistic struggle which was looked upon favourably in Washington — counterbalanced the loathsome concessions made to the Axis. Pétain's prestige cleverly enhanced by his publicity agents had an effect not only on the people of France. This was so true that, acting both with astuteness and deference, President Roosevelt assigned the stripes of Admiral Leahy to the stars on the sleeve of Marshal Pétain. One might think that these two men were drawn to each other to say the least, they were both far from the wild flings of youth and Admiral Leahy was in no way inclined to consider old-fashioned the antiquated solutions Pétain imposed on France.

Moreover, in 1940, when the American Embassy installed itself in Vichy, Pétain was popular in France, whatever one might say. 'C'est not'

This American position is encouraged, if not determined by Mr Murphy, political adviser of General Eisenhower

He affirmed (1) that Gaullists and Republicans were a small minority in North Africa

(2) That the arrival of General de Gaulle and the re-establishment of the Republic in Algiers would cause great disturbances considerably hindering the military action of the Allies

The British position

The British position was as follows

(a) General de Gaulle expressed the almost unanimous thoughts of French resisters and republicans

(b) Vichyites and Fascists are rejected by the French people

(c) A provisional Republican Government is to be desired in Algiers as much for the continuance of the war in Africa as for public opinion in France

(d) Therefore a de Gaulle-Giraud agreement on a military basis must be set up on previous political agreement, ending dictatorship and re-establishing Republican freedom in North Africa

This British position was upheld with great strength by Mr MacMillan, British Ambassador, and by Mr Carvell, consul-general

bon Dieu, c't homme là' or 'What would become of France if the Marshal died?' were current sayings. In its mental disaster France held on to Pétain as a groggy boxer hangs on to his opponent.

The cult of Pétain certainly did exist and it is comprehensible that the Americans were taken in and believed that the Vichy Government was truly representative of the desires of the French people.

But what cannot be understood, cannot be admitted by a Frenchman, is the fact that they believed in the lasting quality of this popularity, against all probability, against everything which happened before their very eyes. That they believed in it, despite Montoire, despite Laval, despite the prisoners, the requisitioning, the executions and the deportations. Despite all evidence. That they believed in it even after breaking off relations with Vichy, to the point of using that by-product Darlan.

It is true that the slow deterioration of enthusiasm for the Marshal, the progressive fading out of the cult did not work its way to the surface, to the glitter of external ceremonies, did not impair the warmth of the clamours given out by the cheering brigade.

And how could the American diplomats possibly have heard the ditties sung by little girls skipping in the courtyard of council houses:

Y a pu d'feu	There is no more fire
Vive Pucheu	Vive Pucheu
Y a pu d'pain	There is no more bread
Vive Pétain	Vive Pétain
Y a pu d'argent	There is no more money
Vive Darlan.	Vive Darlan.

How could they have heard the disrespectful words sung to the tune of the old hymn to the good old God by the Compagnons de France:

Maréchal nous voilà	Marshal here we are
Sans savon, sans pinard, sans tabac.	Without soap, wine or baccy.

How could they have known those young lads of twenty who attempted to reach England by crossing the Pyrenees on foot, or the Channel in any rickety old vessel, or who joined the Merchant Navy in order to throw themselves into the sea off the coast of Gibraltar?

How could they have known that the B.B.C. was being listened to in

the houses of the workers, that Vs ornamented the walls of the poorer districts, that midinettes found a hundred ways of wearing quite innocently the Lorraine Cross?

These things cannot be discovered from the depths of a comfortable embassy car, they were not dreamt of by the aristocracy who were served by Maurras, the anachronic, or by financiers and big industrialists who got their due when a 'German order' was imposed on them from the shelter of the French State. It is not even impossible, let it be said in passing, that the State Department representatives became imbued with their first shade of anti-Gaullism because they frequented these 'well-born' people and the middle-class bourgeois who tried to appear as such. Both categories of people were frankly anxious regarding this adventure and considered it the 'right thing' to despise Gaullism as well as de Gaulle, the adventurer who had sprung from amongst them as a derailed engine, de Gaulle who had brought himself down to the level of the people by disowning his origin.

Yet these were the circles most favoured by American diplomats. In Algiers as in Vichy, Mr. Robert Murphy saw the 'right' people, those who, by their personal position, by their business and their name, held to political ideas full of stability and depth and who expressed these ideas with great ease. Was this the social class which, in his eyes, represented the 'people of France', the class whose decisions were to build up the régime of to-morrow?

And so that unchanging element in the policy of the State Department, excellent in itself — the respect for democratic freedom and for the wishes of the people of France — was to become unfortunate owing to the shape it took and the path it followed, for it did not understand that in the France of the defeat nothing was settled, nothing was permanent. And for anyone who has not sensed that the wishes, the desires, the hopes of the French people at the moment were not of a permanent nature, it may seem queer to see Pétain honoured in 1940 and Darlan despised in 1942.

Over this matter the young republic of the United States — or has the U.S. ceased to be a young country? — may have found some difficulty in following the evolution of an old nation such as ours, imbued with history. This may surprise a Frenchman who has very stereotyped ideas on America. . . .

But it does explain completely, amongst other fortunate, or unfortunate, manifestations of the policy of the State Department towards France, the persistent line of anti-Gaullism.

Once more it was a refusal to be open-eyed, a denial of the state of things which reminds one of the views of the Court of Rome on Copernic's solar system.

*E pur si muove. . . .*

For the informants of the State Department, de Gaulle remained the technician whose ideas on motorized warfare had not been appreciated and who had been raised by the strange game of fate to a role for which he was obviously not fitted. To this set image time was to bring such modifications that it became unrecognizable. Two years of a difficult life had transformed the tank warfare technician into a political animal singularly difficult to manage. But the State Department was to become aware of this only later.

This question of the Gaullist movement was vital both for the future of France and for the future of American relations with the people of Europe. Each country had its Darlans, each its Gaullists. In order to oppose maybe an arbitrary seizure of power by the latter, will the State Department continue to evoke, maintain and uphold the former? For if this great American principle (invented by us from the time of the Revolution) which makes the fate of the people depend on their own choice, is excellent, if its application is equally excellent, namely not to establish definitely any power which might be prejudicial to such a decision, surely in order to spare the people a government which *maybe* they do not desire, there is no need to impose on them a government which is *undoubtedly* the opposite of their choice?

I judge Gaullism objectively, without sentiment. I look upon it in fact as a sensible way of behaving in order to exercise a realistic policy, a war policy. It is a fact that France was Pétainist in 1940, that it ignored de Gaulle, believing in defeat: it is a fact that there was only an handful of Gaullists in North Africa on November 8th, 1942. It is a fact that Mr. Robert Murphy was in the right when he advised that there should be no Gaullist French troops taking part in the landing.

But it is also a fact that the France of 1943 disowned Pétain, that it believed in Victory, considered that General de Gaulle had served the nation well and that June 18th, 1940 had become an historic date for

France. And the ever-rising wave of Gaullism in Africa since the arrival there of General de Gaulle must also be taken into account.

How many people, to avoid being thrown into Darlan's arms, sought refuge in those of de Gaulle? So the temporary expedient created by Robert Murphy, paradoxically and irrefutably, laid the foundation stones of Gaullism in Africa.

And with this I end my account of events in Algiers. During those agitated months I was concerned not only with the events which took place but I witnessed an amazing evolution of popular opinion towards these events. I believe that these events and this evolution were important for the future of France, of Europe, and also for the future of Franco-American relations which will in part control the fate of Europe tomorrow. I have seen the results of applying American foreign policy on this first French soil to be freed.

The apparent results are contradictory.

No one can deny that, on the military field, it bore fruit. The campaign in North Africa, undertaken at the start with insufficient land forces, a complete failure at the beginning in Tunisia, ended gloriously. There was little American or French blood lost on November 8th. No irreparable hatred was born as would have been the case had there been prolonged military opposition. On the contrary, French troops fought heroically in Tunisia to enable Anglo-Saxon reinforcements to arrive and settle in. In all these fortunate results, Mr. Robert Murphy plays a dominant part, although he evades praise as much as reproaches with great modesty. Whatever the reproaches concerning his political activity during the months which followed, the diplomat did undoubtedly succeed in the task assigned to him in 1941: the preparation, support and final success of an Allied landing on the soil of North Africa. This is much to his credit. In the political field, there was no expedient, no subterfuge which could keep the door closed against de Gaulle. President of the French Government, he holds to-day all of the powers he sought, which were refused to him but which he obtained in spite of the refusal. It was time for the State Department to notice what they had not foreseen — even though there might be but one chance in a hundred for this to materialize — that after the war the United States might have to deal with General de Gaulle, president of the French Government. Basing themselves

on the diplomatic reports of their representatives, Mr. Cordell Hull and Mr. Sumner Welles could not, it is true, grant the event the least probability. The situation was awkward for France: it began to look as though to ensure her free choice, she was going to be prevented from turning anywhere outside certain determined directions, labelled paths of freedom. It is easy to see how far this might have led: 'You will follow such and such a line and no other however much you may favour it. For the first is the only, the true path to freedom.' This was indeed a queer pharisaism. Am I wrong in saying that in the circumstances the feelings of the people were betrayed by their representatives?

*In the economic field:* there is no doubt but that the United States acquired substantial advantages and took guarantees for the future. I therefore think, putting aside my feelings as a Frenchwoman, that Mr. Robert Murphy's work must have been considered satisfactory, as judged from the other side of the Atlantic. There is, however, no doubt that difficulties will arise if the present government of France refuses to acknowledge that Admiral Darlan gave valid engagements in the interests of our country.

As to the moral result of the State Department's policy, I think purely and simply that it was disastrous in this particular instance. I do not refer to North African opinion: that stage is passed. But I repeat that the whole of Europe was shaken by the cynical use made of Darlan. For Belgium, Norway, Holland, Yugoslavia, Greece, Denmark, Poland, Czechoslovakia, all had their renegades of to-morrow, ready to be made use of by the United States.

What about France?

France who, after Dunkirk and Mers-el-Kebir, was seized with doubts towards her traditional British Ally, had put all her hope and much of her affection in her American liberators. She had complete confidence in them. These things can be said simply: an enslaved French people had neither the time nor the liberty of mind to nourish complicated feelings.

But from the day when the United States launched into a large-scale policy by their use of Darlan, the small people of France felt ill at ease. Their attitude changed. The United States ceased to be faultless in their eyes. One could read this in every line in the clandestine press of the time. One heard it through all the confidences of 'those who came from there'. They said that the French people were prepared to be bombed by the Americans, even if these did not always hit military objectives. But



bruised, wounded, bleeding as France was, her touchy susceptibility could not resign itself to the feeling of being a mere pawn on the chess-board of the war, a pawn whose reactions, whose hatreds and dislikes were of no account.

People of my country, having lived and matured in conditions of material and moral suffering such as the United States scarcely dream of, silently thought that, as in 1918, it was in the way the war is won that the way in which the peace will be won — or lost — is written.

The Darlan episode was not reduced in their eyes to a mere temporary expedient, but the first in date of an inescapable series of military, political, economic and social necessities which would be exercised at their expense.

And their deception, their bitterness was all the greater, all the more comprehensible because they had placed their hopes higher, their faith in liberties of which the greatest democracy in the world was the symbol.

Since Algiers knew Darlan, Italy has known Badoglio. Is the line of action in politics to take the last error as a starting point?

Nevertheless, since then, Allied troops have liberated France. And I believe that Franco-American friendship is sufficiently robust, warm and sincere to have resisted the shock, caused by Darlan, violent and unexpected though it had been. For rarely in the long history of our country has any people been so popular as the Americans have been during the last three years.

